

# *The* MODERN BENONI

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# THE MODERN BENONI

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DAVID NORWOOD

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Bellin, R. and Ponzetto, P., *Mastering the Modern Benoni and the Benko Gambit*, Batsford, London 1990

Hartston, W., *The Benoni*, Batsford, London 1969

Matanovic, A. (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Chess openings volume A*, Chess Informant, Belgrade 1979.

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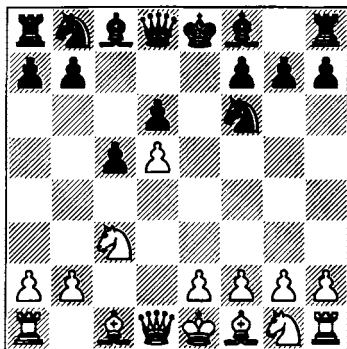
*Chess Informant* 1-58, S.I. Chess Informant Ltd, Nicosia

*New in Chess Yearbooks* 1-30, Interchess BV, Alkmaar



# Introduction

The fundamental starting position of the Modern Benoni arises after the moves 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6, reaching the following diagram:



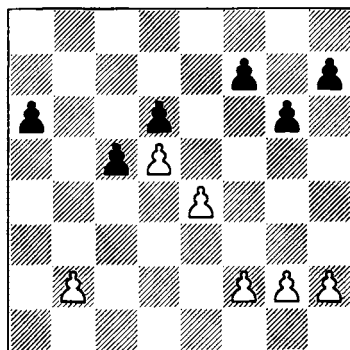
In this chapter we start our discussion of the opening by taking a look at the roles of the individual pieces in the Modern Benoni. Typical plans and pitfalls will also be discussed, and finally some tactical themes will be highlighted.

## White's Pieces and Pawns

In order to isolate the key features of each piece we shall take the individual pieces one by one, using partial diagrams to illustrate the various interactions between them.

## The a2 pawn

The a-pawn is usually played to a4, preventing Black from expanding on the queenside with ...b7-b5. Sometimes White cramps Black further with a4-a5 and will then meet ...b7-b5 with axb6 *en passant*. The resulting structure is difficult to assess.



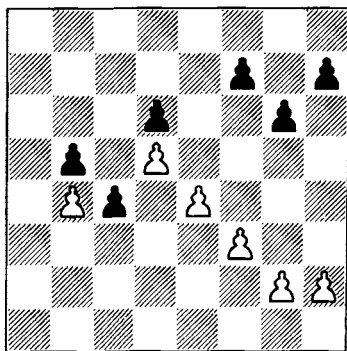
Black's weak pawn on a6 is compensated for by pressure along the semi-open b-file after the thematic ...♖b8. White, in turn, occasionally defends the b-pawn with the simple ♖a2 and continues to apply pressure on the a6 pawn. A favourable a4-a5 is achieved when White exerts enough influence on a6 (e.g. the combination of a bishop on e2 and a rook on a1) to stop Black from

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playing ...b7-b5. A useful strategy for Black in these positions is to deploy a piece (knight or bishop) to b5. A knight on b5 can eye the important d4 square and a bishop on this square controls the a6-f1 diagonal. Of course, capturing the piece would allow ...a6xb5, restoring harmony to Black's queenside pawn structure.

### The b2 pawn

As a rule, the white b-pawn will remain on b2, though if Black does manage to expand on the queenside with ...b7-b5, White can often respond with b2-b4. This advance really puts the question to Black's pawn structure. One's instinct is simply to advance the c-pawn with ...c5-c4.



Here White's compensation for allowing Black a protected passed c-pawn is the use of the d4 square for a knight, which can go on to occupy the weakened c6 square. In general, White also exchanges

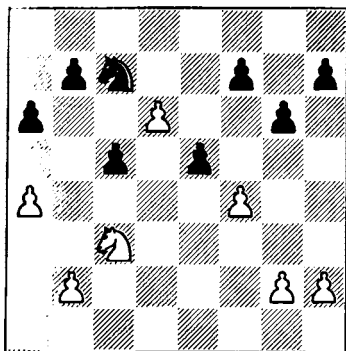
his a-pawn so that the black b5 pawn comes under attack from the knights on c3 and d4 and a rook on a5. If White has not opened the a-file, the prospects are better for Black as the b5 pawn is secured and White has no means by which to undermine the queenside pawn mass.

After b2-b4, the Black player should also look at the possibility of playing ...c5xb4 (or simply of ignoring b2-b4, so long as Black is ready to recapture on c5 with a knight) thereby obtaining the c5 square for his queen's knight. Generally speaking, this is a better plan than closing the queenside with ...c5-c4. Black's strategy in the Benoni is to create sufficient dynamic counterplay on the queenside to offset White's central pawn majority. If the queenside becomes blocked, White can expand in the centre and on the kingside at leisure.

### The d5 pawn

The white d-pawn usually remains on d5, though in 'pawnstorm' positions in which White establishes pawns on f4, e4 and d5 it can sometimes advance to d6.

In the following diagram White has played e4-e5 and has answered ...d6xe5 with d5-d6 attacking the knight on c7 and thereby gaining a tempo. This is quite a dangerous plan though White must cash in immediately

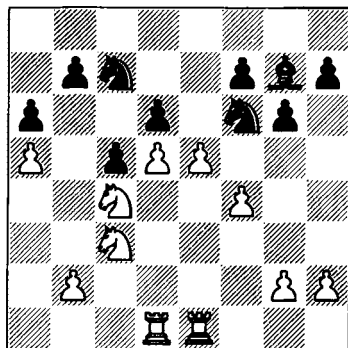


on this pawn thrust as after ...f4e6, the knight can jump to d4 when Black may well be able to round up the stranded d-pawn. The kind of positions in which a quick e4-e5 and d5-d6 are effective, are those where White has a bishop on c4 and the f-file will become open – hence the f7 pawn will be vulnerable. Also, after d5-d6, the d5 square is open for the white knight which may then terrorise squares like f6, e7, c7 or b6. Benoni players must always be on the look-out for these tactical themes.

### The e2 and f2 pawns combined

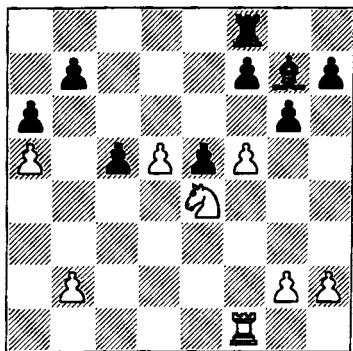
The e-pawn is central to all of White's ideas in the Benoni. In most variations it advances to e4, where it can remain, simply occupying a key central square, or more thematically advance to e5 if Black has left this square fatally weak. One golden rule in the Benoni is that if White can advance e4-e5 with impunity, Black

will be left with a very dismal position.



A typical favourable e5 break by White. Black has no control over e5 whereas White has three pieces 'attacking' this square. White can also use the e5 break as a sacrificial idea to advance the f-pawn. Since White can rarely afford to concede the e5 square by playing f4-f5 he often uses the e-pawn as bait to cover the e5 square. The idea behind this sacrifice is that Black's e5 pawn restricts the mobility of his important pieces: the bishop on g7, rook on e8 and knight on d7.

In the diagram overleaf, White has succeeded in blockading the e-pawn and the knight on e4 is ideally placed (very often, Black's best defensive try is to return the sacrificed pawn by playing ...e5-e4, thereby opening the long diagonal and reserving the e5 square for the d7 knight). Note also in this position that Black's c5 pawn can be vulnerable and

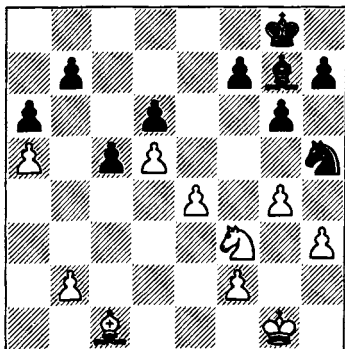


that White has acquired a dangerous passed d-pawn.

The white e-pawn can also be deployed on e3 if White adopts the restricted centre (e.g.  $\text{Qg5}$  and e3). In the fianchetto system, White often keeps the pawn on e2 in order to retain some control of d3, and keep the long diagonal open for the g2 bishop.

### The g2 pawn

The g2 pawn is rarely moved unless White has adopted the fianchetto variation with g2-g3.



Benoni players will often place their king's knight on h5 to tempt White to play the weakening g2-g4. Depending on the exact position, the black knight usually returns to f6, when White often finds that this pawn thrust has merely loosened his position. Although there are some exceptions, it usually doesn't pay for White to advance the pawns in front of his king in the Benoni.

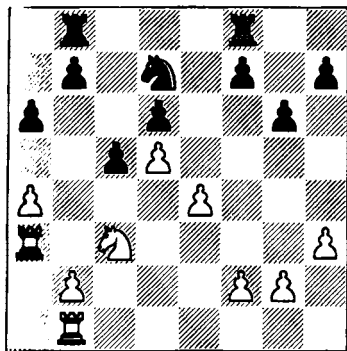
### The h2 pawn

Usually White's h-pawn stays at home or advances to h3, where it often performs a useful function of keeping Black's bishop or knights out of g4.

### The rook on a1

The queen's rook is often best placed on the curious square a3 after a2-a4. Here it not only keeps up the necessary pressure along the a-file but also exerts a lateral influence along the third rank. On a3 it is also safe from any tactical blows involving Black's bishop along the long diagonal. If White then deploys the other rook to b1, the thematic b2-b4 advance becomes even more effective. However, the a1 rook can also be placed on b1 or can at times harass the black queen on c7 by occupying c1.

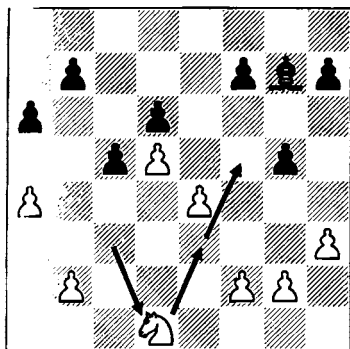
In the diagram overleaf, White is poised to meet 1...b7-b5 with 2



$\text{axb5}$   $\text{axb5}$  3  $\text{b4}$  when the rook on  $\text{b1}$  is holding  $\text{b4}$  and the rook on  $\text{a3}$  is preparing to infiltrate on the  $\text{a}$ -file.

### The knight on c3

White's queen's knight is a static piece that simultaneously holds up Black's queenside ideas and supports the white centre. The knight may sometimes go to  $\text{a4}$  and then to  $\text{b6}$  if the queenside is blocked, but generally speaking it is ideally placed on the  $\text{c3}$  square.

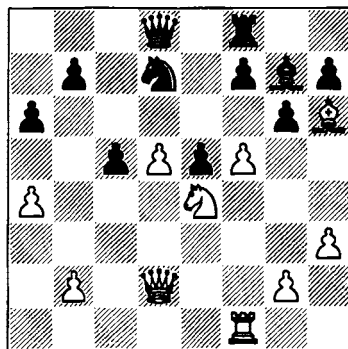


Occasionally, when Black has played the weakening  $\dots \text{g6-g5}$ , the knight will head to  $\text{e3}$  via  $\text{d1}$  to occupy  $\text{f5}$ .

### The bishop on c1

The dark-squared bishop is a valuable piece which holds White's position together, particularly in the Sämisch variations where White has placed all his pawns on white squares ( $\text{a4}$ ,  $\text{d5}$ ,  $\text{e4}$ ,  $\text{f3}$ ,  $\text{g2}$ ). If Black manages to exchange this bishop for a knight, White's position can quickly become untenable.

The bishop can be deployed on most squares along the  $\text{c1-h6}$  diagonal: on  $\text{e3}$  it nestles behind White's pawn centre, on  $\text{f4}$  it can harass the vulnerable  $\text{d6}$  pawn, while on  $\text{g5}$  it exerts pressure along the  $\text{h4-d8}$  diagonal. In the Sämisch variation, the bishop can be used as an attacking piece by the thematic  $\text{Bh6}$ .



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In this diagram it will be exchanged for the fianchetto bishop, which will weaken the vulnerable dark squares near Black's king. In most cases, though, White should seek to preserve his dark-squared bishop.

### The queen on d1

The white queen does not usually play an aggressive role in the early stages of a Modern Benoni and may stay on its starting square for some time. It is often best placed on c2 where it can defend e4 and generally support White's queenside play, but in the Sämisch variation, it is usually better placed on d2 where it has some influence on the dark squares and can support a future  $\text{h6}$ . On other squares, say e2, it can become a potential target.

### The king on e1

Not surprisingly, White nearly always castles kingside in the Modern Benoni, after which the king will remain on g1 or shuffle into the corner.

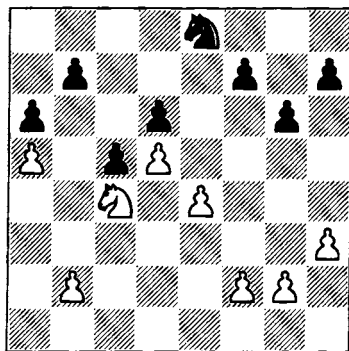
### The bishop on f1

The light-squared bishop can be placed on e2, g2 or d3. Recently, d3 has become a popular square for the bishop: on this square it protects e4 and allows the rook on e1 more influence along the semi-

open e-file. The worst square for this piece is c4 as Black will gain a tempo with any future  $\dots b7-b5$  advance – the only real justification for deploying the bishop to c4 is if White intends e4-e5 and d5-d6 uncovering an attack on f7.

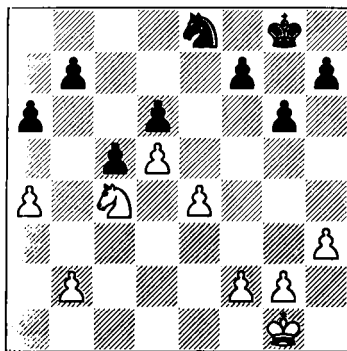
### The knight on g1

The king's knight is a crucial piece which plays a pivotal role in each of White's typical plans. One of the best squares for the knight is simply on f3 where it protects the e5 square. However, in many cases the knight is re-routed via d2 to c4 where it again influences e5 but also keeps an eye on the queenside. Note also that after this manoeuvre White is free to advance his f-pawn.



This is an ideal position for White as Black cannot kick the knight away from c4 with  $\dots b7-b5$ . The knight has a massive influence on the board as it protects b6, attacks the weak d6 pawn,

blockades the advance of the c-pawn and prepares e4-e5. The Black player will usually attempt to dislodge a knight from c4 with ...b7-b5, ...b7-b6 and ...♙a6 or even ...♞d7-b6, challenging the knight immediately at the cost of slowing down his queenside play. The only drawback in deploying the knight to c4 is that it gives further weight to ...b7-b5 if Black is able to force through this advance.



A lesser-known idea of a knight on c4 is to meet 1...b7-b5 with 2 ♖xb5 ♜xb5 3 ♞a5! when the knight can occupy c6. This works particularly well if White has a fianchetto bishop supporting the d5 pawn and c6 knight.

### The rook on h1

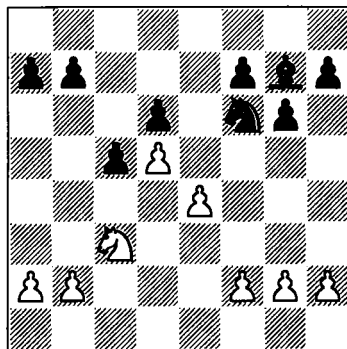
Once White has castled the king's rook is usually best placed on e1, where it supports the e4 pawn and any e4-e5 advance. If White has played f2-f4, the rook may

remain on f1 since it will become a powerful piece if the f-file becomes open. If the centre has become fairly static (as in the Sämisch) it can deploy to the queenside on c1 or b1, supporting b2-b4.

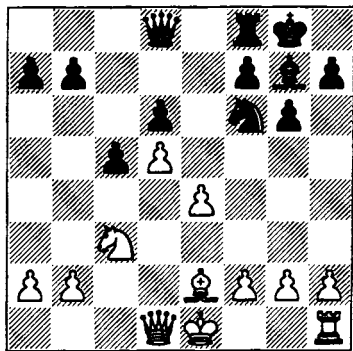
## Black's Pieces and Pawns

### The a7 pawn

The black queen rook's pawn is nearly always played to a6 in the Modern Benoni, threatening the advance ...b7-b5 and at the same time stopping White from occupying b5. Occasionally, Black can play ...b7-b5 immediately without playing ...a7-a6.



In the above position, Black can play ...b7-b5! as the e-pawn will be unguarded after 1 ♞xb5. Usually, this exchange favours Black who gains a central pawn for a flank counterpart and also obtains use of the b-file for queenside play.



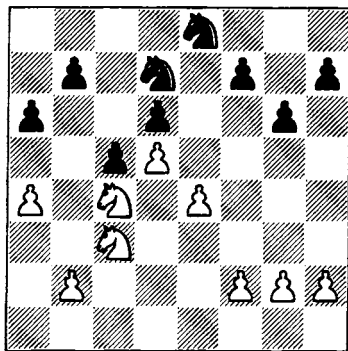
This is a more complex example along the same lines. Black can again play 1...b5! with the tactic 2  $\text{Qxb5}$   $\text{Qxe4}$  3  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Wa5+}$  4  $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Qxc3+}$  5  $\text{bxc3}$   $\text{Wxb5}$  with material equality. Note that after ...b7-b5 White usually has the option of throwing in e4-e5 and this possibility must always be considered before playing ...b7-b5.

Black might also choose to leave the a-pawn at home if he wishes to retain the option of ...b7-b6 and ... $\text{Qa6}$ , as in the example in the section devoted to the bishop on c8 below.

### The b7 pawn

In the majority of cases, Black's b-pawn will attempt to advance to b5. In some cases however, Black plays the slightly paradoxical ...b7-b6.

The following diagram is a good example of a necessary ...b7-b6. Black prevents White from playing the cramping a5 and retains his aspirations of queenside



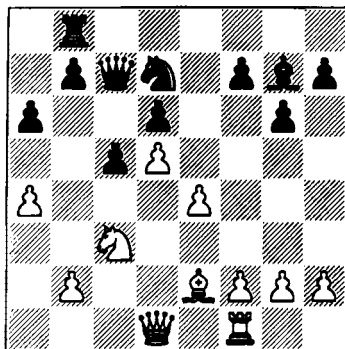
counterplay. In general though, ...b7-b6 with a view to playing ...b7-b5 at some later date can be a waste of time. As we have seen earlier, a4-a5 is not usually a move to be feared.

In addition, ...b7-b6 might be played with the idea of re-routing the queen's rook to a7 and then to e7, pressurising the e-pawn. If Black has omitted ...a7-a6 and played ...b7-b6, he is usually attempting to swap light-squared bishops by playing ... $\text{Qa6}$ .

### The c7 pawn

Black has only one plan involving the c-pawn: advancing it to c4. This move, if timed correctly, can be extremely useful, vacating the c5 square for the d7 knight and bringing the d3 and b3 squares under Black's control. In addition, ...c5-c4 aids Black's queenside ideas as it blocks the f1-a6 diagonal from the white bishop on e2, thereby enhancing the chances of a future ...b7-b5.





In the above position, Black should play 1...c4! with the idea of advancing the b-pawn by ...b7-b5.

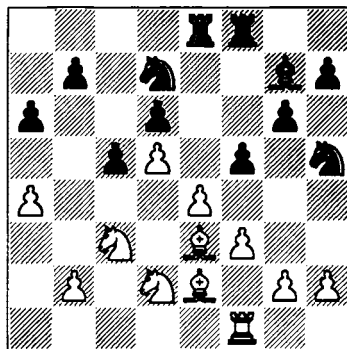
The obvious drawback of ...c5-c4 is that it allows White use of the d4 square for a piece. Occasionally, Black will play ...c5-c4 and sacrifice the pawn, either to gain access to c5 or to follow up by ...b7-b5-b4 with gain of tempo.

### The d6 pawn

The black d-pawn plays the crucial role of holding up White's e4-e5 advance.

### The f7 pawn

One of the most difficult decisions that a Benoni player will have to make is whether or not he should advance the f7 pawn. The weakening of e6 and the kingside in general can quickly lead to an inferior position. However, a correctly timed ...f7-f5 can totally undermine White's central grip.

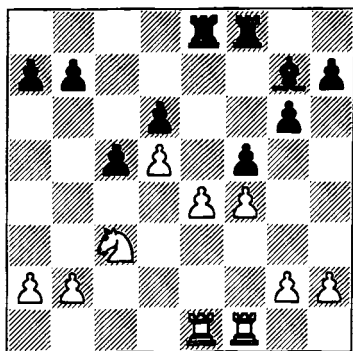


The diagram is a fine example of a favourable ...f7-f5. Black immediately pressurises White's centre and at the same time threatens ...f5-f4, netting the e5 square. Note that with a knight on f3, White could take advantage of the weakness on e6 created by ...f7-f5 with ♖g5-e6. Where appropriate, the Black player will do well to insert the precautionary ...h7-h6 to stop this plan.

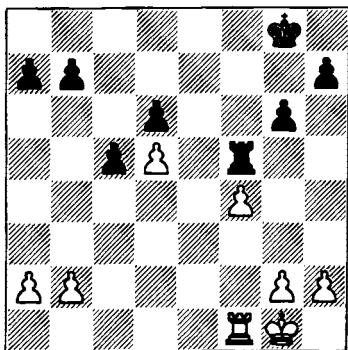
In an inferior position, Black may have to resort to playing ...f7-f6. In nearly every case, this is a sure sign that something has gone wrong – it is frequently played when White is threatening e4-e5 and Black cannot adequately cover this square with his minor pieces. The move weakens e6 and hems in the bishop on g7 for no compensation.

When White has adopted the pawnstorm formation, the ...f7-f5 thrust can be even more effective (see diagram overleaf).

In this type of position, a favourable ...f7-f5 can very often



give Black a better pawn structure. Naturally, if White is able to play e4-e5 after ...f7-f5, Black will soon be overrun by the passed e-pawn.

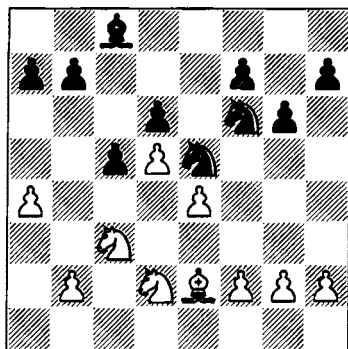


However, a pawn structure as above, (after ...f7-f5, e4xf5 ♖xf5), strongly favours Black due to the weak and isolated pawn on d5.

### The g7 pawn

This pawn inevitably advances to g6 in order to allow a kingside fianchetto. It will usually only advance further, to g5, if it becomes

necessary to secure the e5 square for a knight.

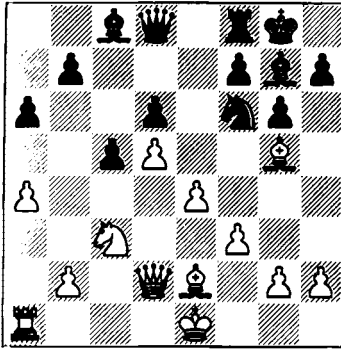


In the diagram Black should play 1...g5! to deny White the opportunity to kick the knight on e5 away with f2-f4. Advancing the g-pawn is extremely risky, however, and should not be played if the f5 square cannot be adequately covered. Note how after 1...g5 2 g3 g4! 3 f4 gxf3 Black has successfully acquired the e5 square for his pieces.

### The h7 pawn

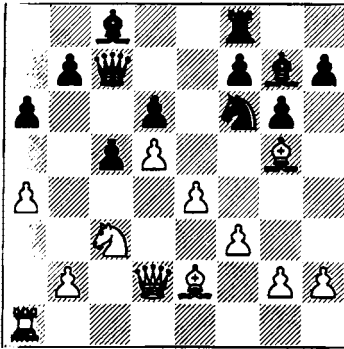
The h7 pawn is mainly used to break the annoying pin from a white bishop on g5.

Extra possibilities arise in the Sämisch variation. For example, in the diagram overleaf, Black can play ...h7-h6 even though the pawn is apparently *en prise*. After 1...h6 2 ♗xh6, Black can continue 2...♞xe4 3 ♞xe4 ♜h4+ regaining the piece. This continuation is usually good for Black even if he



loses the d6 pawn at the end, because his dark-squared bishop will be unopposed. This combination, however, depends on White having played f2-f3 with a king on e1.

In this same variation, Black can sometimes try another unusual idea:



Here Black could play 1...h5!?. This seemingly weakening move attempts to kick the white bishop away from g5 by ...Qh7, and will normally be followed by ...f7-f5. In addition, if there is a white knight on g3, Black also has ideas of ...h5-h4-h3.

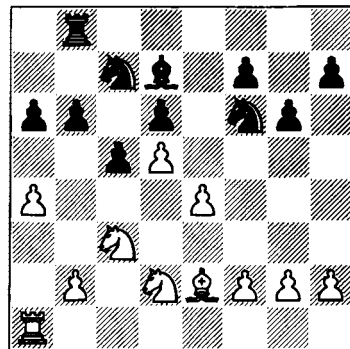
## The rook on a8

Invariably Black's queen's rook is used on b8 to support ...b7-b5. It can occasionally stray to the king-side on e8, but this normally only occurs when Black has no chance of playing ...b7-b5 and has decided to play ...f7-f5.

In conjunction with ...b7-b6, the a8 rook can also go to e7 via a7, though this plan is rarely seen and is not necessarily all that useful.

## The knight on b8

In common with the Nimzo-Indian, the Modern Benoni puts a great emphasis on knights. The b8 knight can be used in two ways. The classical approach is to put the knight on d7 where it can either go to e5 or, in conjunction with ...c5-c4, to c5.



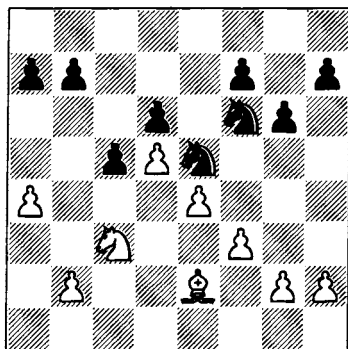
The other choice is to play the knight to a6 and then c7 (as in the above diagram). From here, the

knight plays a different role in that it aims to further the advance of Black's b-pawn. With the knight on c7, the d7 square is vacated for the black bishop which again controls the all-important b5 square. When Black adopts this formation, ...b7-b5 is usually unstoppable and White has to play in the centre. The serious drawback of the b8 knight going to c7 rather than d7 is that e5 is no longer controlled and Black's position is far more likely to collapse to an e4-e5 central thrust. Nevertheless, if Black adequately covers e5, he can look forward to a good game on the queenside.

### The bishop on c8

The most difficult (and sometimes even redundant) piece in the Modern Benoni is Black's light-squared bishop. This bishop can rarely be developed to a useful square: on b7 it exerts no influence on White's granite-like centre and on d7 it often merely gets in the way of Black's knights. One of the main systems in the Classical variation involves an early ...g4 to exchange this bishop for a knight on f3 or a bishop on e2.

In the following diagram, Black has exchanged the troublesome bishop for a knight. However, the thematic ...g6-g5?! is no longer a viable option as White would play ♖c3-d1-e3-f5 and take advantage



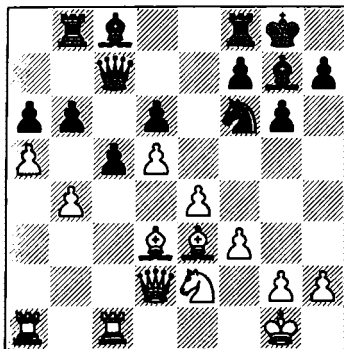
of Black's light-squared weaknesses.

The other option is to play ...b7-b6 and deploy the bishop to a6. This works best when White has placed a knight on c4, as the bishop can then exchange off the knight at an opportune moment.

### The queen on d8

In some ways Black's queen is similar to White's in that it is usually under-used in the early mid-game. The safest square for the queen is d8: on a5 and b6 it is exposed to ♖d2-c4 ideas and on e7 it may be a target for an e5 thrust. On d8, however, the queen is able to access the queenside via d8-a5 and the kingside via d8-h4 and is therefore highly versatile.

The only other viable option for the queen is c7, where it can support the advance of the c-pawn. White's antidote to this formation is shown in the diagram overleaf where the pin on the c-file is used to undermine Black's structure.



Note also that if the queen is deployed to either c7 (or e7) Black must beware of a quick e4-e5 thrust followed by d5-d6 hitting the queen with tempo.

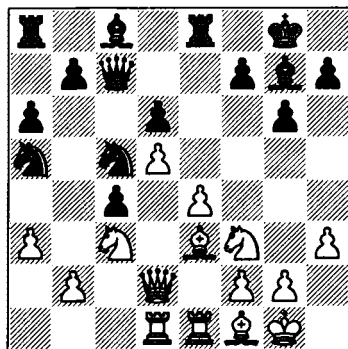
### The king on e8

(Only very rarely does Black delay castling kingside: it is extremely dangerous to keep your king in the centre for long if your opponent has a central pawn majority. Black never castles queenside in the Modern Benoni.

### The bishop on f8

The fianchetto bishop is the pride and joy of all Modern Benoni (and King's Indian) devotees, and will usually be retained even at the cost of material (e.g. the exchange). The bishop rarely ventures from its haven on g7 where it shelters the king and rakes along the h8-a1 diagonal. If Black 'loses' this bishop for a knight without immediate compensation,

he can usually never recover from the dark-square weaknesses left by its absence.



Black can rarely afford to exchange the bishop for the knight on c3, even if he wins a pawn. In the above diagram, Black played the suicidal 1...♙xc3? and after 2 ♜xc3 ♘xe4 3 ♜d4!, he was soon mated.

In some situations the fianchetto bishop will emerge from its shelter to deploy on e5 or d4 in order to support an attack against the white king.

### The knight on f6

A vital piece in all of Black's plans. The knight can go to d7, e8, h7, h5 or g4, all of which have some useful purpose.

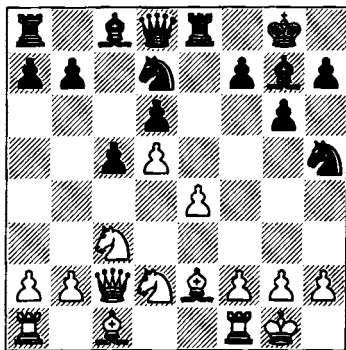
a) d7. The knight usually retreats to this square when Black has adopted one of the ...♘a6-c7 systems. Its main function is to defend e5.

b) e8. This is usually played as

a defensive move when there is no other way to cover the vulnerable d6 pawn. In some systems, however, Black will play ...♘e8 in order to play a quick ...f7-f5. In addition, if Black has knights on f6 and d7, then ...♘e8 followed by ...♘c7 is sometimes used to achieve the standard set-up with knights on d7 and c7.

c) h7. Rarely seen except in the Sämisch where it can attack the white bishop on g5 and free the f-pawn to advance to f5.

d) h5. An all-purpose move which prepares ...f7-f5, covers the e5 square by liberating the bishop on g7 and controls the f4 square (occasionally the knight can even occupy f4).



The most striking example of ...♘h5 was seen in game 3 of the famous Spassky-Fischer match of 1972. Here, Fischer ignores the obvious positional defects of White capturing on h5, relying on the semi-open g-file for compensation.

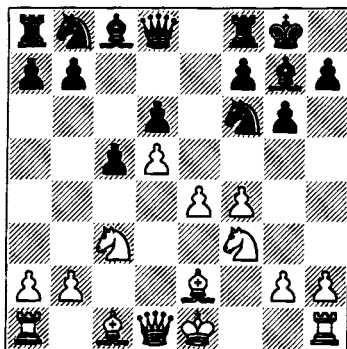
e) g4. Occasionally played to harass a white bishop on e3 when White has not played h3. Usually, however, g4 is used as a springboard to reach e5.

### The rook on h8

The black king's rook is usually placed on e8 after castling, where it exerts pressure on the e4 pawn. When Black intends to play ...f7-f5, however, the rook is better placed on f8 where it can support the f-pawn. The only other reason not to place the rook on e8 is when this square is needed as a retreat for the knight on f6.

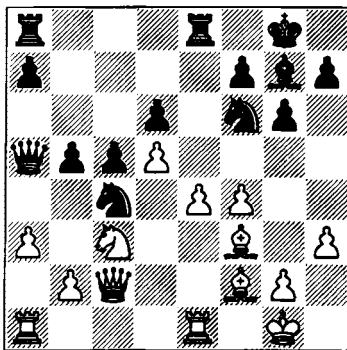
### Plans and Pitfalls

#### White adopts the pawnstorm centre



This is the most aggressive and frightening looking pawn formation that White can set up. White makes his intentions clear from the start and if Black does nothing,

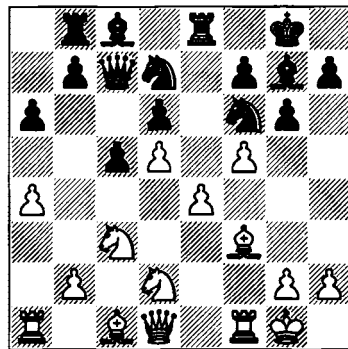
the e4-e5 thrust will prove decisive. It is clear from the diagram that the crucial square is e5. If Black can overprotect this square, then the struggle continues. If, however, e5 is under White's jurisdiction, a timely e4-e5 will shatter the co-ordination in Black's position and White will achieve a decisive advantage. A good example of how Black protects the vulnerable e5 square and manages to generate his own queenside play is Kozul-Nunn, Wijk aan Zee 1991 (Game 2 in the first chapter of this book), which continued as follows from the above diagram: 9...♗g4 10 0-0 ♖bd7 11 ♖e1 ♖e8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♜a5 14 ♗e3 b5 15 a3 ♖b6 16 ♗f2 ♖c4 17 ♜c2



It is clear from the diagram that Black has achieved all of his objectives: e5 has been secured and queenside play has been generated. However, even at this stage it is possible to go wrong: 17...♖xb2? (with the idea 18

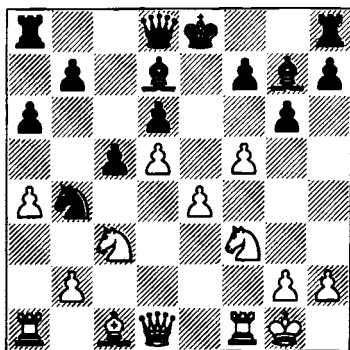
♜xb2 ♖xe4!) would run into the thematic 18 e5 and White has achieved his aim. Instead of this 17...♖d7!, as played in the game, continued the policy of overprotecting e5 and maintaining the tension on the queenside.

It is important to note that instead of the bulldozing his way through the centre with e4-e5, the pawnstorm centre also allows White the opportunity to play f4-f5. One of the obvious drawbacks of this idea is that White relinquishes all control over the e5 square. In the following diagram, for example, f4-f5 is a clear mistake.



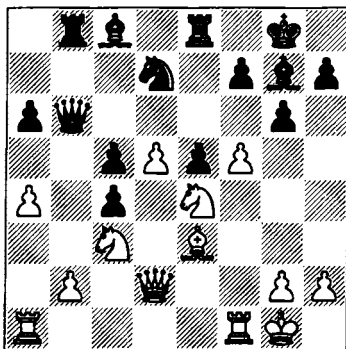
White has no compensation for his lack of control of e5 as his kingside attack has not progressed far enough. Usually, White cannot afford the luxury of losing the fluidity in his pawn structure with f4-f5 unless Black has no means of occupying e5. In the following diagram, taken from the famous game Kasparov-

Nunn, Lucerne Olympiad 1982 (Game 8 in this book), White played 13 f5! with good justification.



Here White has immediate compensation for weakening e5. The most important factor is that Black cannot control e5 with a knight, but White also has a lead in development, good attacking prospects against the black king and some protection over e5 (with the knight on f3 and perhaps a future ♖f4). The game continued 13...0-0 14 ♗g5 f6 15 ♗f4 gxf5 16 ♗xd6 ♗xa4 17 ♖xa4 ♔xd6 18 ♕h4! with a clear advantage to White.

An even more refined way of playing f4-f5 is to first sacrifice the e-pawn with e4-e5. This is a very subtle and difficult plan to implement but, if correctly executed, can generate a huge kingside attack. After e4-e5, White does not answer ...d6xe5 with f4xe5, but with the bypassing move f4-f5!.



What is White's compensation for the pawn? He has complete control over the e4 square, a passed d-pawn (which, when advanced to d6, will vacate the d5 square for the c3 knight or the queen), an open c1-h6 diagonal with ideas of ♗h6, and, most important of all, a kingside attack which Black can do very little about. The Black player will do well to avoid these positions or at the very least be very wary of this sacrifice in all his calculations. If White does not manage to place a piece on e4, Black's best defensive chance is to return the sacrificed pawn with ...e5-e4!. This move vacates the e5 square for the d7 knight and clears the all-important a1-h8 diagonal for the bishop on g7. In this case, Black's defensive prospects are much brighter and White will find it harder to break through on the kingside. The above diagram is from the game Meulders-Douven, Dutch Ch. 1991 (Game 31 in this book), which continued 21...gxf5 22 ♖xf5



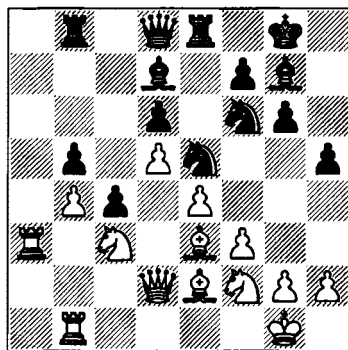
♙xb2 23 ♖e1! ♜b6 24 ♜b1 ♙a3 25 ♜xb6 ♠xb6 26 ♜g5! with the unstoppable threat of ♜xg7+, mating.

Yet another important point in the pawnstorm formation is that after e4-e5 d6xe5, the d5 pawn is passed and can at times advance to d6. When Black has developed his queen's knight to d7, this sacrifice is rarely seen as the d6 pawn is blockaded. However, if Black has played one of the ...♠a6-c7 lines, White gains a vital tempo on the c7 knight after d5-d6 and may be able to utilise this extra move to good effect.

### White stems Black's queenside play

Apart from the usual precautionary moves to stop Black from advancing on the queenside (e.g. a2-a4-a5), White's main plan when ...b7-b5 is inevitable is to blockade the queenside with b4. This is a subtle and powerful plan but White must be careful that he is not just giving Black a protected passed pawn for nothing. Ideally, the queenside is completely blocked, Black's b-pawn and queenside come under fire and White launches a kingside attack with his extra centre pawn.

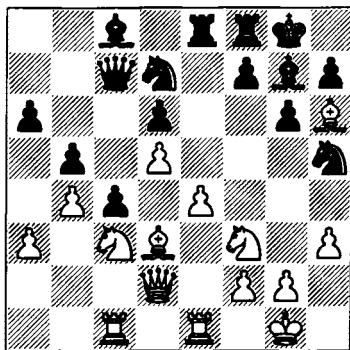
In the next diagram, White has an undisputed advantage and has managed to set up the ideal b2-b4 type blockade. Apart from moves such as 1 ♜a5 or 1 ♜ba1



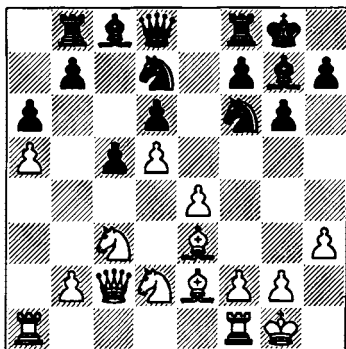
with queenside play, the immediate 1 h3! with the decisive threat of f4 would put Black's whole position in question. It should be noted that in these positions minor piece exchanges favour Black as the passed c-pawn is an asset in all endgames.

Although White's main idea after blockading the queenside is to play in the centre and on the kingside, the open a-file is often an added bonus which ties Black up. In the diagram overleaf, from the game Levitt-Suba, Dublin 1991, Black has adequate compensation for White's queenside advantage.

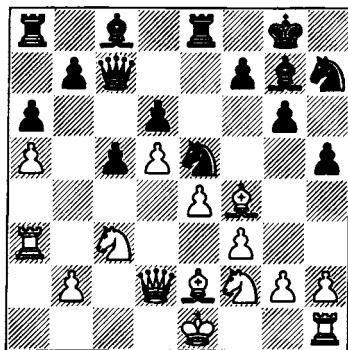
The game continued 1 ♠c2 ♠e5 2 ♠d4 ♠xh6 3 ♙xh6 ♙b6 4 ♠ed1 ♠d3! with an unclear position. The crucial difference between the last two positions is that here White cannot use the a-file to attack the black b-pawn and Black is able to exchange minor pieces, looking towards an advantageous endgame in which the protected passed c-pawn is a useful asset.



White can also restrain Black's queenside play by a4-a5. In these positions, Black will normally play ...b7-b5 anyway and rely on counterplay along the semi-open b-file to compensate for the weak a-pawn. Naturally, there are positions when after a4-a5 Black cannot play ...b7-b5 without making serious positional concessions.



In this position, after 1...b5?! White obtains a clear advantage by 2 axb6 ♖xb6 (2...♗xb6 3 ♙xa6 and White wins a pawn) 3 ♖c4 ♖b4 4 ♖a5, threatening ♖c6 netting the exchange.

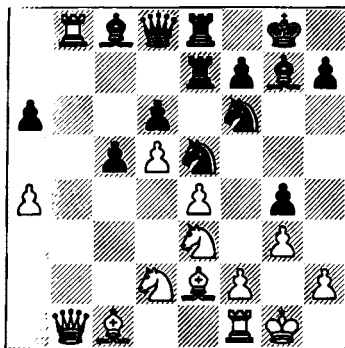


The difference in the above position, taken from Fedorowicz-van Wely, Wijk aan Zee II 1990, is that White has no control over c4 and thus Black can safely play 1...b5 2 axb6 ♗xb6 3 ♖a2 with roughly equal chances.

### Black plays ...g6-g5

The double-edged ...g6-g5 advance is one of Black's weapons to counteract f4 by White. It is based on the positional theme that after 1 f4 gxf4 White has no pawn cover of e5. In general, if Black can secure the e5 square, he can successfully defend his kingside and gain the upper hand. Naturally, the White player will not play f4 unless there are mitigating circumstances but instead will try to capitalise on the weakness on f5 created by the loosening ...g6-g5 advance.

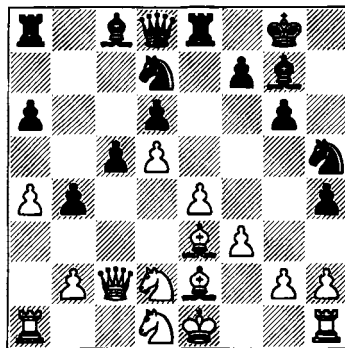
From the diagram overleaf, Fedorowicz-Norwood, London 1988 (Game 16 of this book), continued 1...♗c7 2 ♖xc8! ♗xc8 3 ♖f5 ♖d7 4



♠b2 and Black's position completely collapsed in a matter of moves. As this example has shown, when Black plays ...g6-g5, the light-squared bishop is of paramount importance as it is the only piece that can defend f5, and it may even be worth White's while giving up material to exchange it.

### Black plays ...f7-f5

The ...f7-f5 advance is based on similar themes to ...g6-g5. Having played ...f7-f5, Black is threatening to secure the e5 square in two ways: first, after ...f5-f4 White no longer has the option of playing f4 himself and Black is left in control of e5; and second, Black may exchange pawns on e4 and if White recaptures with f3xe4, Black has again netted e5. It should be mentioned that after Black plays f5xe4, White has the option of recapturing with a knight, retaining the possibility of f3-f4.



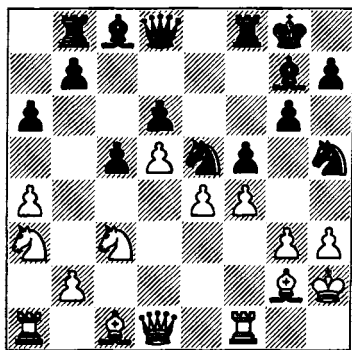
From this diagram, Sadler-Gelfand, Oakham 1988, continued 1...f5 2 ♖c4 (2 exf5 ♜xe3 3 ♜xe3 ♜g5!) 2...b3! 3 ♜xb3 ♜b8 4 ♜c2 ♜e5 5 ♜d2 f4 (netting the e5 square) 6 ♜f2 ♜g5 7 ♜g1 ♜g3! 8 hxxg3 hxxg3 9 ♜xc5 dxc5 with advantage to Black.

The Sadler-Gelfand game is a fine example of how Black can use the ...f7-f5 thrust to undermine White's seemingly rock-solid centre. However, it must be noted that in the above diagram, Black has certain other advantages. His lead in development, active piece and queenside play have probably already swung the advantage his way.

## Tactical Themes

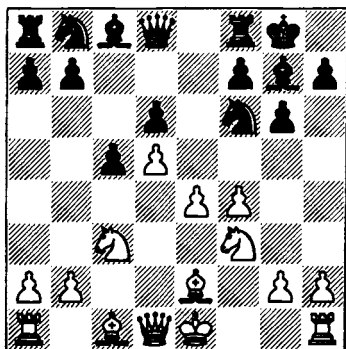
We now take a look at just some of the myriad tactical possibilities that you will encounter in games with the Modern Benoni.

One of the most famous tactical points in the Modern Benoni was seen in Korchnoi-Kasparov,



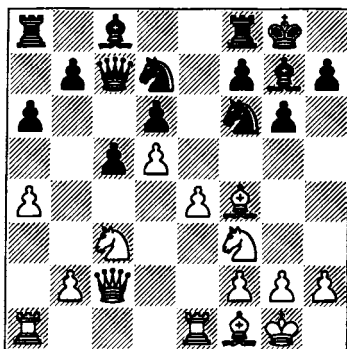
Lucerne Olympiad 1982 (Game 22 of this book), when in the above diagram Kasparov played 1...b5!!, ignoring the threat to his knight on e5. His tactical justification for this was that after 2 fxe5  $\text{Qxe5}$  Black's pressure on the vulnerable g3 pawn will compensate for the loss of the piece. In fact, Korchnoi ignored the knight on e5 and the game continued 1 axb5 axb5 2  $\text{Qaxb5}$  fxe4 3  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Qd7}$  with wild complications.

A similar idea is the following shot:



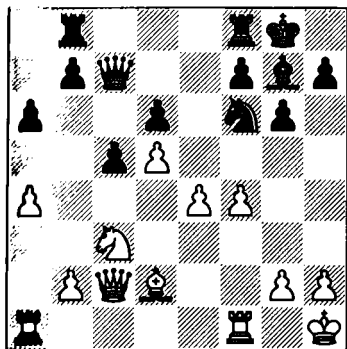
After 1...b5 2  $\text{Qxb5}$  Black has

the tactic 2... $\text{Qxe4!}$  3  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Wa5}$  4  $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Qxc3+}$  5 bxc3  $\text{Wxb}$ . Though the resulting position is not necessarily good for Black this is a possibility that must a ways be considered.

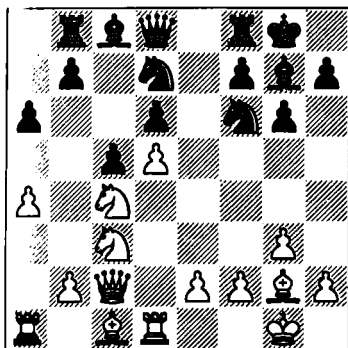


In the above diagram, Black has just played 1... $\text{Wc7}$ , defending the vulnerable d-pawn. If White allows it, Black will no doubt play ... $\text{Qh5}$ , followed by ... $\text{Qe5}$  with a typical Benoni struggle. However, White has the tactical shot  $\text{Qxd6}$   $\text{Wxd6}$  2 e5 regaining the piece. Although this temporary sacrifice appears promising for White, it is not always clear which side has the advantage. After all, White has given up his dark-squared bishop for a temporary initiative. In the above example, after 1  $\text{Qxd6}$   $\text{Wxd6}$  2 e5 Black would continue 2... $\text{Wb6}$  ! exf6 (3 e6!? is also a possibility 3... $\text{Qxf6}$  and as White seems to have no obvious follow-up, Black may even have the better of it. However, the Benoni player should

be aware of this possibility as after recapturing on d6, the queen may sometimes find herself without a good retreat square.

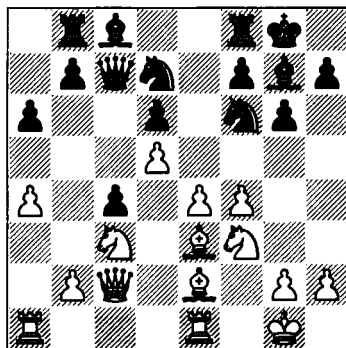


In this diagram, Black has very little protection over e5 (it is better to overprotect this square if possible) which White can take advantage of by 1 e5! dxe5 2 fxe5 Qxe5? (2...Qg4 is better) 3 Qf4 and White wins the exchange on b8. The same concept can also be employed in the fianchetto variation:



After 1...Qb6, attempting to remove the white knight from c4, White has 2 Qxd6! Qxd6 3 Qf4! with a winning advantage.

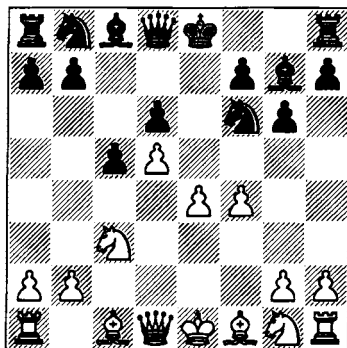
The most obvious drawback of the pawnstorm centre is the weakening of the g1-a7 diagonal, which Black can occasionally take advantage of in the following manner:



1...Qg4! 2 Qd2?? (White should play 2 Qd4, though after 2...Qxd4+ 3 Qxd4 Qc5 Black is in charge) 2...Qc5+ 3 Qh1 Qf2+ 4 Qg1 Qh3+ 5 Qh1 Qg1+! 6 Qxg1 Qf2 mate.

This concludes our introductory survey. As you will discover in the rest of this book, and in your own games, the Modern Benoni is such a rich opening that any number of combinational possibilities, strategic plans and piece manoeuvres may occur in a single game and one always has to be alert to for unusual ideas. But that is what makes it such fun to play!

In this chapter we consider variations in which White occupies the centre immediately by playing both e4 and f4. This plan combines aggression with logic: White has an extra central pawn, so why not roll it forward as quickly as possible? The usual method is to play for a quick e4-e5 to disrupt Black's development and open up the central files. Play is usually of a critical nature and Black cannot afford to be caught hanging around. We take the following position as our starting point:



- |        |         |
|--------|---------|
| 1 d4   | ♘f6     |
| 2 c4   | c5      |
| 3 d5   | e6      |
| 4 ♘c3  | exd5    |
| 5 cxd5 | d6      |
| 6 e4   | g6      |
| 7 f4   | ♙g7 (D) |

Leaving aside 8 ♗b5+, which is covered in Chapter 2, the main way for White to continue is to develop the knight with 8 ♘f3. This

forms the bulk of this chapter and is covered in Games 1-4.

Another way for White to play is to go 'all-in' with 8 e5, a move in the true spirit of the 'pawnstorm' idea. Alas, players are not so brave these days and this system is rarely seen in tournament play. Nevertheless, if you are playing Black in the Modern Benoni you have to be familiar with it – the dangers cannot be underestimated – so we uncover the pitfalls of this immediate advance in Game 5.

---

## Game 1

### Norwood – Westerinen

### London 1988

I have always found it easy to take the opposite side against openings that I play regularly. Besides the Modern Benoni, my

other main opening as Black is the Pirc Defence; and whenever I play the White side against the Pirc I do extremely well. The trick

to identify the systems that have caused you the most suffering and then turn them on your opponent!

- |   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1 | d4  | ♘f6 |
| 2 | c4  | g6  |
| 3 | ♘c3 | ♙g7 |
| 4 | e4  | d6  |
| 5 | f4  | 0-0 |
| 6 | ♙f3 |     |

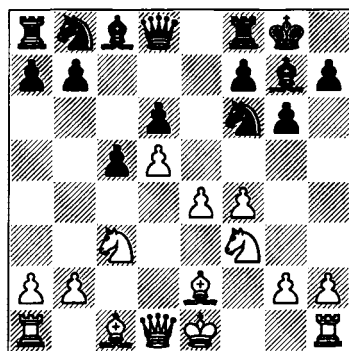
'What?' I hear you scream, 'I bought a book on the Modern Benoni, not the King's Indian Defence!' In practice, the Modern Benoni frequently arises by transposition from a King's Indian. Some of the world's leading grandmasters, including Kasparov, react to the Four Pawns Attack (as this system against the King's Indian is known) by switching into the Modern Benoni. Another line against the King's Indian which often transposes into a Benoni is the Sämisch, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

- |   |           |      |
|---|-----------|------|
| 6 | ...       | c5   |
| 7 | d5        | e6   |
| 8 | ♙e2       | exd5 |
| 9 | cx d5 (D) |      |

Back to the Benoni position (from the first diagram, the game has continued 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♙e2).

- |   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| 9 | ... | ♙g4 |
|---|-----|-----|

A few years ago both 9...♙e8 and 9...b5 were considered reliable alternatives to this move, but now I am not so sure that this is the case. White can continue with the pawn thrust 10 e5, when play becomes highly complex.



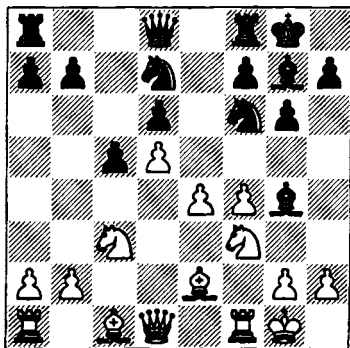
Although Black may be able to keep his head above water, my personal feeling is that the tactics favour White. I propose, then, to neglect these moves in favour of the more solid 9...♙g4. It is a popular misconception in chess that to play an opening well one needs to know *all* the variations. This is nonsense: it is far better to understand one system well than to have a potted knowledge of everything.

#### 10 0-0

Could White have tried the e4-e5 advance immediately? This would contradict the usual rule not to open up the position if one's king is in the centre, though White enjoys a temporary initiative; e.g. 10 e5 ♙xf3 11 ♙xf3 dxe5 12 fxe5 ♘fd7 13 e6 ♘e5 14 exf7+ ♙xf7 15 0-0 ♘bd7 and Black has very active pieces.

#### 10 ... ♘bd7 (D)

The most logical move. The crux of White's system is to play for the e4-e5 pawn break, so Black is attempting to prevent it.



The knight on f3 supports the e4-e5 advance, so Black played ... $\text{Ng4}$  to undermine this support. Deploying the knight on d7 further protects the critical e5 square.

11  $\text{Ne1}$

I believe this to be the best move for White. The alternative, 11 h3, is discussed in Game 4.

11 ...  $\text{Ne8}$

At first sight this move looks natural, as it continues the policy of over-protecting the e5 square. Moreover, putting the rook on the semi-open e-file, where it can pressurise the e4 pawn, is almost gospel in the Benoni. However 11... $\text{Ne8}$  does have its drawbacks and these will be discussed when we consider the alternative move 11... $\text{xf3}$  in Game 3.

12 h3

This forces Black to trade bishop for knight. The only other sensible way of defending the e-pawn is to play 12  $\text{Nd2}$   $\text{xf3}$  13  $\text{xe2}$ . In practice Black has had little to fear in this position. It is difficult for White to defend the

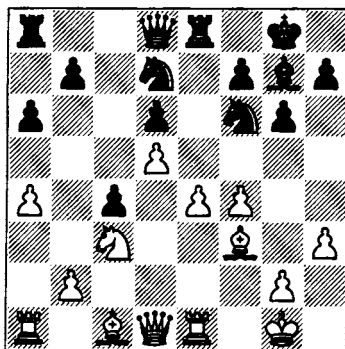
e4 pawn while simultaneously preparing the e4-e5 advance. Black can counterattack by playing for ...b7-b5 or even ...c5-c4.

12 ...  $\text{xf3}$

13  $\text{xf3}$  a6

In the next game we shall consider the alternative, 13... $\text{Wa5}$ , whilst 13... $\text{xc8}$  is considered (by transposition) in Game 4.

14 a4 c4



This move is double-edged. On the one hand it speeds up Black's queenside expansion and creates room for a knight to jump into c5, where it can harass squares such as b3, d3 and e4. The downside to the ...c5-c4 advance is that it concedes the d4 square which White can later occupy with a bishop or knight. My own rule regarding the ...c5-c4 push is: 'Avoid it unless you are absolutely convinced it is right.'

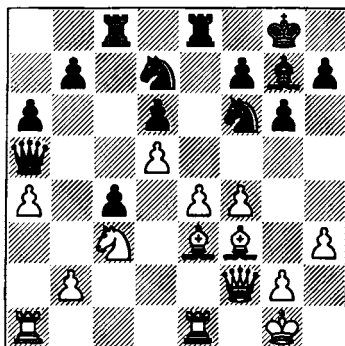
15  $\text{e3!}$

Now ... $\text{c5}$  can be met simply by bishop takes knight. Since Black cannot afford to give White



a passed d-pawn, it follows that any recapturing on c5 must be with another piece.

15 ... ♖a5  
16 ♖e2 ♜ac8  
17 ♖f2

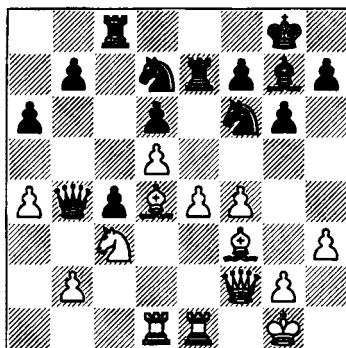


White has carried out a skilful queen manoeuvre. Black wants to play 17...♖c5 but this would be well met by 18 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 19 ♖xc5 ♜xc5 20 e5 ♖d7 21 ♖e4, when Black must jettison material. Note how vicious the e4-e5 advance can be when Black is unprepared. Always remember that after e4-e5 the square e4 is free for the white knight to hop into, from where it terrorises the d6, c5 and f6 squares.

17 ... ♜e7  
18 ♜ad1 ♖b4  
19 ♖d4 (D)

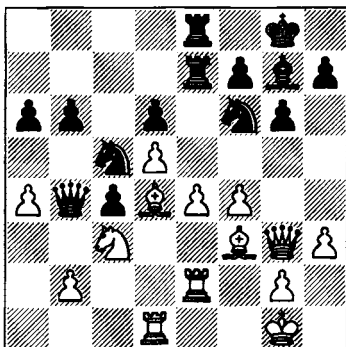
White now has everything. The plan is just to steamroll the centre and 19...♖c5 still fails for the reasons mentioned above.

19 ... ♜ce8  
20 ♜e2



Aiming to double on the e-file.

20 ... b6  
21 ♖g3 ♖c5

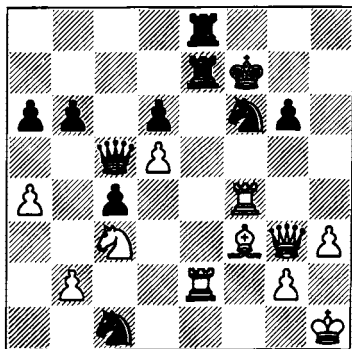


White has made all the preparations ... now for the breakthrough.

22 e5 ♖fd7  
23 e6! ♖xd4+  
24 ♜xd4 ♖f6?

Black could have put up better resistance with 24...fxe6.

25 f5 ♖b3  
26 ♜f4 ♖c5+  
27 ♖h1 ♖c1  
28 exf7+ ♖xf7  
29 fxg6+ hxg6



## 30 ♖h4!

The threat of ♖h7+ is devastating, so **Black resigned**.

Kicking off with this game was perhaps not the best way to advertise the Modern Benoni, but I want to sell you the opening in an objective way. Besides, one can

only become a master of an opening by fully understanding its drawbacks. The Modern Benoni has as many (perhaps more) downsides as any other opening, and this game illustrates a few of them. One of the most important rules in the Benoni can be deduced from a game such as this: central expansion is usually more powerful than flank expansion. Black often grabs space on the queenside but this is more than counterbalanced by White's central pawn majority. Playing the Benoni well involves mastering the juggling trick: preventing White from advancing in the centre while simultaneously pushing on the queen's flank.

## Game 2

### Kožul – Nunn

### Wijk aan Zee 1991

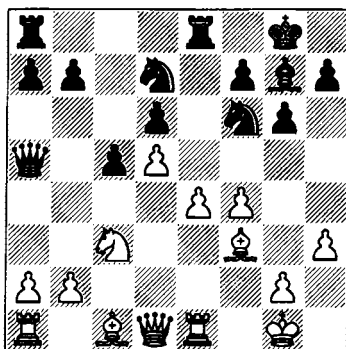
Through another King's Indian transposition we soon arrive at the standard position.

(1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 c5 6 d5 0-0 7 ♗f3 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♗g4 10 0-0 ♗bd7 11 ♗e1 ♗e8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3)

Nothing new so far, but the next move breaks the repetition.

13 ... ♖a5 (D)

This is more incisive than 13...a6: Black develops the queen and prepares ...b7-b5. If White prevents ...b7-b5 with 14 a4 then



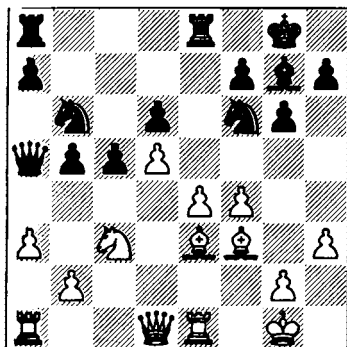
Black can continue with 14...c4 (note that Black has not wasted a move with ...a7-a6) and the knight

is ready to jump into c5.

14 ♖e3 b5

Another Benoni rule is that if ...b7-b5 can be played without disaster ensuing then it is usually a good idea. In this position it is obviously favourable since ...b5-b4 threatens to dislodge the knight from the defence of e4.

15 a3 ♜b6!?

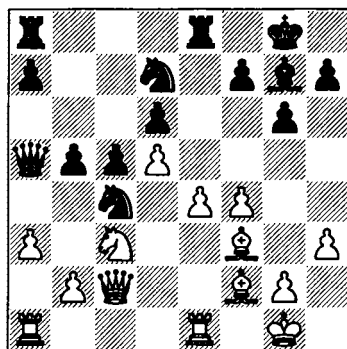


A bold move in the style of the Benoni. But what if White decides to charge? After 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♜xe5 18 ♖xc5 ♜xe1+ 19 ♜xe1 ♜e8 20 ♜f2 White would appear to be doing well. However, 16 ♖b6 can be met by 16...♜c4!?. The idea is 17 exf6 ♜xe3 18 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 19 fxe3 ♜ae8 with a double-edged position, Glek-Jurtaev, Moscow CMA 1989. White has a slight material advantage, but Black's rooks are extremely active.

16 ♖f2 ♜c4

17 ♜c2 ♜d7 (D)

Black has won the opening bout. The e5 square is very well protected and Black has managed

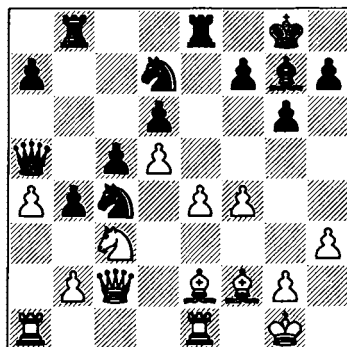


to expand smoothly on the queen-side. Compare this position to the one after move 17 in the previous game.

18 ♖e2 ♜ab8!

Black does not mind the doubling of the pawns after ♖xc4 since this is more than compensated by the pressure that the rook would assert along the b-file. Black is now threatening to win a pawn with ...♜xb2 and ...♜xc3.

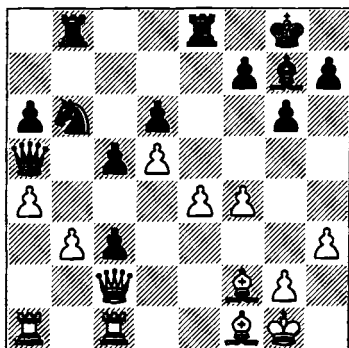
19 a4 b4



A clever idea which gives Black a passed c-pawn. In some positions such a pawn might become

an easy target but the pressure of Black's rooks on the b- and e-files makes it difficult for White to co-ordinate his position.

- 20 ♖xc4      bxc3  
 21 b3      a6  
 22 ♞ec1      ♖b6  
 23 ♖f1



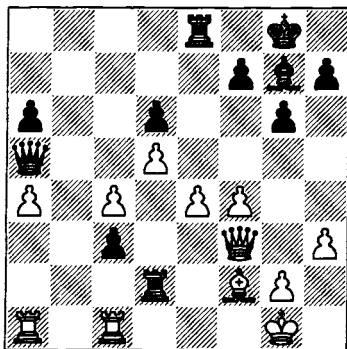
White had no option but to retreat the bishop; a black rook on b2 would have been a nightmare for White. But with such an attack Black can carry on regardless...

- 23 ...      c4!  
 24 ♖xc4      ♖xc4  
 25 bxc4      ♞b2  
 26 ♜d3      ♞d2  
 27 ♜f3 (D)

White has a pawn but this is scant compensation for Black's initiative.

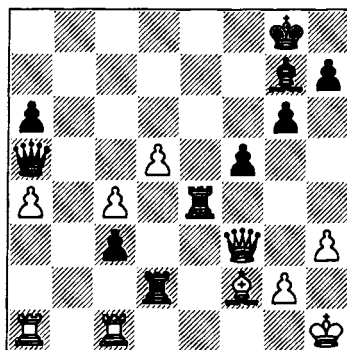
- 27 ...      f5

This is always a nice move to throw in when White is least expecting it. If White captures with 28 exf5 the other black rook enters the fray: 28...♞ee2 29 ♞f1



♞xf2 30 ♞xf2 ♖d4 31 ♞f1 ♞xf2 32 ♞xf2 c2 and White is in dire straits.

- 28 e5      dxe5  
 29 fxe5      ♞xe5  
 30 ♜h1      ♞e4!



A calm move which threatens to mop up White's passed c- and d-pawns.

- 31 ♖e1      ♜c7!  
 32 ♞ab1

Grabbing the rook is suicide: 32 ♖xd2 cxd2 33 ♞cd1 ♖xa1 and ...♞e1+.

- 32 ...      ♞de2  
 33 ♖xc3      ♞e3  
 34 d6      ♜xd6

35 ♖b4 ♜c6  
36 ♜f1 ♙xh3+  
37 gxf3 ♜e2+

White resigned

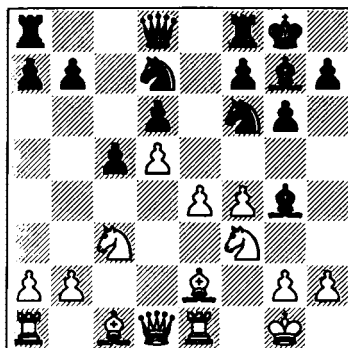
After 38 ♖g1 ♙d4 mates.

A very instructive game. From the outset Black followed two strategic plans: to expand on the queenside and restrain White's e4-e5 break. Once this had been

achieved, Black continued with a series of tactical blows and a pawn sacrifice to maintain the initiative. At no point in the game was White able to make use of the central pawn majority or the bishop pair. In short, Black displayed the skill and versatility required to play this opening. If you can achieve this magic mix, you will be a demon Benoni player.

### Game 3 Vaiser – Maki Helsinki 1991

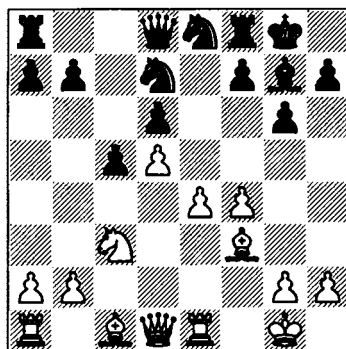
(1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♙e2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♙g4 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 ♜e1)



Once again we have reached our starting position via transposition from the King's Indian. In the previous games we considered 11...♜e8 but Black has an important alternative.

11 ... ♙xf3

12 ♙xf3 ♘e8



As we stated earlier, e8 is a natural square for the rook, but on e8 the rook prevents Black's knight retreating to this square. Why does the knight want to be on e8, you may ask, when it seems happy on f6 hitting the e4 pawn? Well, that is certainly one school of thought, but another idea is to re-deploy the knight to

the queenside via e8 and c7. Here it can support the natural ...b7-b5 advance. Moreover, the rook can then come to e8 where it joins the d7 knight and the g7 bishop in preventing the e4-e5 thrust. Note that this fits perfectly with Black's dual strategy against this system: expand on the queenside and prevent White's e4-e5 advance.

Having played the White side of this position, I can assure you that it is not easy to combat this strategy. For example: 13 ♖e3 a6 14 a4 ♘c7 15 a5 ♘b5 and already Black has good piece activity; if 16 ♘xb5 axb5 and the a-pawn is hard to defend. Otherwise the knight on b5 can harass the c3 knight or even hop into the square d4. Black can also follow up with the usual plan of ...♞ab8 and ...b7-b5 to create pressure along the b-file.

13 ♞e2!

A very original concept by White. More natural moves such as 13 ♖e3 give Black excellent chances for the initiative. The good news is that most players on the White side are unlikely to know about 13 ♞e2 (unless they have read this book) and it is hardly ever seen in tournament play.

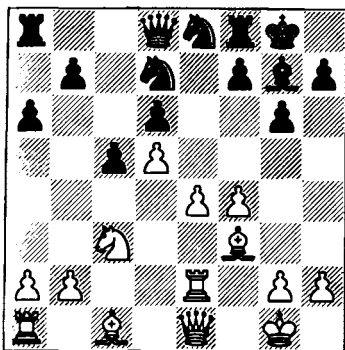
13 ... a6

In view of White's next move perhaps 13...♘c7 is an improvement. Then 14 ♖e1 could be met by 14...♞e8 and once again we are

protecting the e5 square. Although White may be able to randomise here with 15 e5 dxe6 16 d6 ♘e6 17 ♖xb7 ♞b8, Black's pieces are becoming very active. The option of playing e4-e5 followed by d5-d6 is a recurring theme for White. Except in special situations Black should be able to cope with these tactics. The d6 push allows the knight to hop into the useful e6 square. This opens up a host of tactical possibilities since the e6 knight has influence over the important d4 and f4 squares. In addition, the d6 pawn, whilst causing temporary chaos in the Black camp, is likely to become very weak. White may capture fxe5 to support the d6 pawn, but with the g7 bishop, d7 knight and e8 rook bearing down on e5 it is unlikely that White will be able to maintain this pawn chain. White can often capture a pawn with ♖xb7 but this gives the rook an excellent means of entering the game with ...♞b8.

In conclusion, White certainly has the option to make the position unclear but my instinct is that the muddy waters will favour Black. More importantly, the compact nature of Black's position makes it easier to keep control, whereas White can easily over-extend and in this case his own position may collapse spectacularly. I refer to this as the *spring effect*.

14 ♖e1



This move is the idea behind 13 **Qe2**. White forces Black to abandon queenside expansion to cope with the immediate threat of the pawn roller; e.g. 14...b5 15 e5 b4 16 e6 and we are back to the rule that a central push usually does more damage than a flank thrust.

14 ... **Qe7**

The queen is not really the piece that one would choose to use to restrain the e5 advance. In the Benoni the queen sits most happily on d8 where it retains a royal prerogative to deploy along the d8-a5 diagonal or along the d8-h4 diagonal. As soon as it moves along one, it forfeits the right to play along the other. The rook is better for defending against e4-e5 and this is the logic behind my alternative suggestion, 13...**Qc7**.

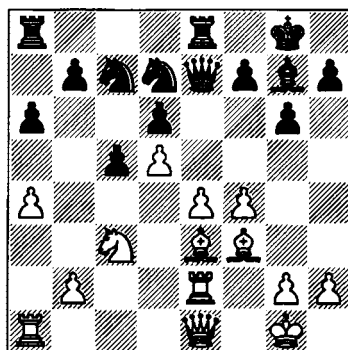
15 a4 **Qc7**

If you want to play this system let me suggest an alternative here: 15...**Qd4+**. Probably White's best response is 16 **Qe3** **Qg7** 17 **Qd1!** **Qxe3+** 18 **Qxe3** **Qae8** 19 **Qe2** when e4-e5 will give White some

advantage. Otherwise 16 **Qh1** **Qg7** and Black can continue in the usual way with ...**Qfe8** and the knight on g7 can hop into f5 if White plays e4-e5 (or if any piece is left unprotected on the e-file).

16 **Qe3** **Qfe8**

Presumably 16...b5 failed in view of 17 e5 dxe5 18 d6 winning the exchange – it is a useful safety tip in the Benoni to always beware of the opening up of the f3-a8 diagonal in this way.



17 **Qd1!**

Keeping up the momentum. Once again Black is prevented from playing 17...b5, this time because 18 e5 dxe5 is met by 19 d6 forking the queen and knight. Another safety tip and another reason why I usually prefer to leave the queen at home on d8.

17 ... **Qd8**

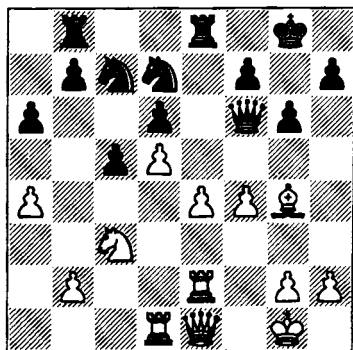
Egg on his face?

18 **Qf2** **Qb8**

19 **Qh4** **Qf6**

20 **Qxf6** **Qxf6**

21 **Qg4**



It is clear that Black is failing in his mission to prevent the e4-e5 push, since White has already eliminated one defender while another is dislodged.

21 ... Rbd8  
22 e5!

This always hits you when it is least desired; 22...dxe5 is met by 23 Qxd7 Rxd7 24 fxe5 and the pawns are rolling.

22 ... Qxf4  
23 Re4 Qg5  
24 exd6 Rxe4  
25 Qxe4 Qxg4  
26 dxc7 Rc8  
27 h3 Qf4  
28 d6 Qf5  
29 Qc3 Qf6

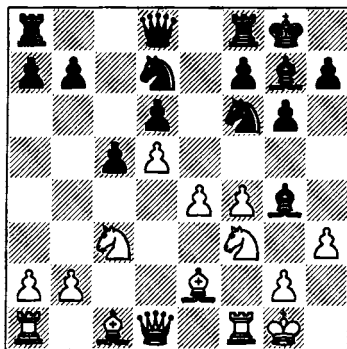
Here Black resigned; 30 d7 Qxd7 31 Qd5 wins a full rook.

Once again I apologise if I have put more readers off the Benoni – most games are really not like this! I cannot stress enough the importance of identifying the problems of the opening and learning how to avoid these disasters. Once again, Black's position collapsed because he was unable to restrain the e4-e5 advance in an effective way. It is also noteworthy that again Black did not even get off the ground with queenside expansion.

### Game 4 Nogueiras – Kasparov Barcelona 1989

(1 d4 Qf6 2 c4 g6 3 Qc3 Qg7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 Qd3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 Qe2 exd5 9 cxd5 Qg4 10 0-0 Qbd7 11 h3)

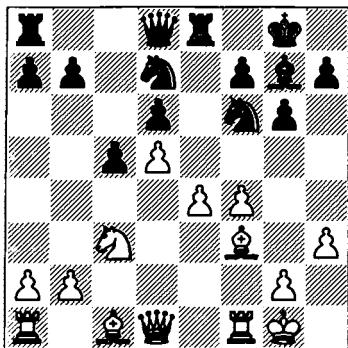
Our usual transposition from the King's Indian, but this time we see an alternative to 11 Re1. At first sight the move 11 h3 appears illogical, since Black will often voluntarily capture the knight after 11 Re1. Has White therefore lost a move? It is not so





simple; 11 h3 is a useful move in its own right and gives the option of kingside aggression with g2-g4. More importantly, the rook might be better placed on f1 if White is playing for an f4-f5 advance rather than the e4-e5 plan that we have seen above.

11 ... ♖xf3  
12 ♖xf3 ♜e8



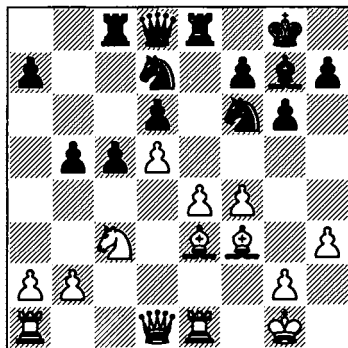
Taking play back along lines considered in the first two games. Black could continue instead with 12...c4 13 ♖e3 ♜a5 14 g4 ♜ac8. At first sight White's kingside pawns look formidable but remember the *spring effect* – if you push too far it can rebound in your face. Moreover, it is unclear how White should follow up; e.g. 15 f5 ♖e8! 16 g5 ♖e5, when it is hard to see how White's attack will progress – the only prospect seems to be along the h-file, but this will take a long time. In contrast Black has a clear plan at hand: ...♖c5 and ...♖d3; e.g. 17 h4 ♖c5 18 h5 ♖d3 19 ♜e2 ♖xb2 – and it is actually

quite difficult to get at the black king.

13 ♜e1

My own feeling is that White should go for it with 13 g4, since g4-g5 will embarrass the knight. Presumably Black would have to reply with a move such as 13...h6.

13 ... ♜c8  
14 ♖e3 b5

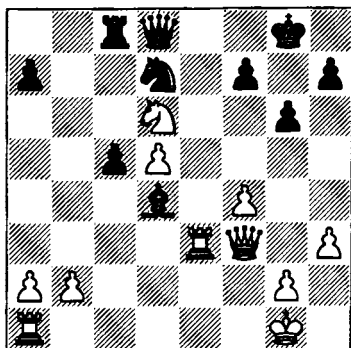


This is another useful option for Benoni players to bear in mind: deflecting the c3 knight with the ...b7-b5 thrust in order to capture the pawn on e4. The knight on b5 is often hitting the d6 pawn though, so you have to get the calculations right!

15 ♖xb5 ♖xe4  
16 ♖xe4 ♜xe4  
17 ♖xd6 ♜xe3  
18 ♜xe3 ♖d4  
19 ♜f3 (D)  
19 ... ♜b8

Black will have no problems regaining the exchange and the initiative is worth the pawn.

20 ♖h2 ♖f6



21 ♖c4      ♙xe3  
 22 ♗xe3      ♗xd5  
 23 ♗e5

Although Black has regained the sacrificed material, White's last move forces liquidation into a drawn endgame. This happens quite frequently in the Benoni; after wild tactics White's e- and d-pawns are traded for Black's b-

and d-pawns leaving the position quite sterile.

23 ...      ♗e8  
 24 ♗xd5      ♖xd5  
 25 f5      ♗g7  
 26 ♖d1      ♖f6  
 27 fxg6      hxg6  
 28 ♖d2      ♗e1  
 29 ♖d6      ♖e4

**Draw agreed**

This concludes our analysis of the lines where White erects a formidable centre with e4 and f4, and develops with ♖f3 and ♙e2. My belief is that if Black understands the dual strategy (prevent e4-e5; promote ...b7-b5) and remains tactically alert, then the system is not dangerous. White's position is bigger, difficult to control and surprisingly prone to collapse.

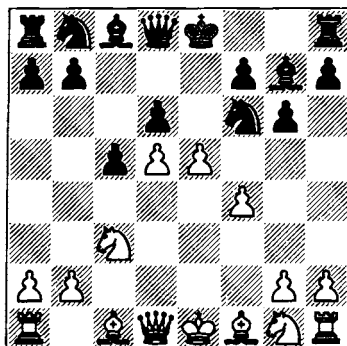
## Game 5

### Legky – Svedchikov

#### USSR 1978

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7) 8 e5 (D)

This move gives the system its character. No pussy footing around with 8 ♖f3: the immediate e5 advance goes straight for the jugular! However, this system, known as the Mikenas Attack, is rarely seen these days. Theory holds that Black can equalise, so few White players bother to look at it. But this may encourage a dangerous



complacency. When the Armenian grandmaster Lputian sprang it on me in the Soviet Union in 1986, I didn't have a clue how to react – my position was lost after a few moves. So read on because it is better to be safe than lost...

8 ... ♖fd7

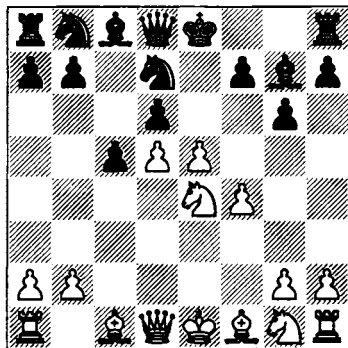
This is the only reliable way to play since 8...dxe5 (favoured by your author against Lputian) is asking for trouble; e.g. 9 fxe5 ♖fd7 10 e6 and now Black has two tries. First, 10...♙xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♖h4+ 12 g3 ♖e4+ 13 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 14 ♙xe2 fxe6 15 dxe6 ♖f8 16 e7 ♖e6 17 ♖f3 ♖c6 18 0-0 ♙xe7 19 ♙h6, when White's rooks will occupy the e- and d-files with devastating effect. In most of these lines Black can win the e-pawn but White's bishop pair and the open files/diagonals count for more. Alternatively, Black can try the line 10...fxe6 11 dxe6 ♖e7 12 ♖d5 ♖xe6+ 13 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 14 ♙xe2. Again Black has an extra pawn but White's initiative (especially the threat of ♖c7) is more important. I tried 14...♙e5 but after 15 ♖f3 my position was not much fun.

The variations which follow are very long and complicated. Moreover, since very few games have been played in these variations in recent years, I am basing my analysis on old theory. Wherever possible, I have tried to chop out analysis but the nature of the system means it has been necessary

to include long and complex variations. Please bear with me.

9 ♖e4

Grabbing the pawn with 9 exd6 does not cause Black any headaches: simply 9...0-0 and Black can recapture the d6 pawn with the d7 knight via f6-e8-d6. Alternatively, 9 e6 is met by 9...fxe6 10 dxe6 ♖b6 11 ♖e4 0-0 12 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 13 ♖xd6 ♙xe6 14 ♖xb7 ♖a4 15 ♖f3 ♖d7 16 ♙b5 ♖xb2 17 ♖b1 ♖ab8 with rough equality according to John Nunn.



9 ... dxe5  
10 ♖d6+ ♖e7!

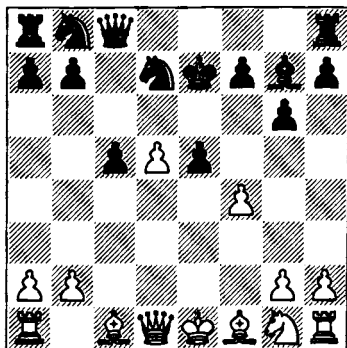
This is the point. 10...♙f8 would block the rook in, whereas 10...♖e7 hits the knight and prepares ...♙e8 followed by artificial castling with ...♙f8.

11 ♖xc8+

Once again we have to get bogged down with variations; but such is life in these tactical positions. White's alternatives are to retreat the knight with 11 ♖b5 or play 11 fxe5. 11 ♖b5 is met by the

logical 11... $\text{Ke8}$ ; White is in danger of being left behind in development and so must continue aggressively with 12 d6+  $\text{xf8}$  13  $\text{Qc7}$  (winning material but using White's only developed piece) 13... $\text{exf4+}$  14  $\text{Le2}$   $\text{Qc6}$  15  $\text{Qxa8}$  (15  $\text{Qxe8}$   $\text{Wxe8}$  is good for Black with White's king stuck in the centre and his pieces undeveloped) 15... $\text{Qd4}$  16  $\text{Qc7}$   $\text{Ke4}$  and despite the rook minus Black is doing well; e.g. 17  $\text{Qd5}$   $\text{Wg5}$  with threats against g2 and d5. 11  $\text{fxe5}$  is less worrying in view of 11... $\text{Qxe5}$  12  $\text{Qxc8+}$   $\text{Wxc8}$  13 d6+  $\text{xf8}$  14  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qbc6}$  and Black has no problems (Nunn).

11 ...  $\text{Wxc8}$



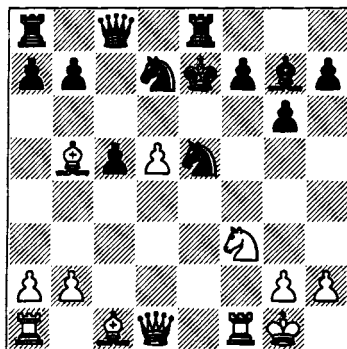
12  $\text{Qf3}$

White could force the king back to f8, blocking the king's rook, with 12 d6+, but this allows Black to develop the knight easily with ... $\text{Qc6-d4}$ . Play might continue 12... $\text{xf8}$  13  $\text{Qf3}$  e4 14  $\text{Qg5}$  h6 with a complicated position which should favour Black.

12 ...  $\text{Ke8}$

If Black wishes to muddy the waters, the recommended move is 12...e4 13  $\text{Qg5}$   $\text{Qb6}$  14 d6+  $\text{xf8}$  with endless complications which you will have to work through yourself.

13  $\text{fxe5}$   $\text{Qxe5}$   
14  $\text{Lb5}$   $\text{Qbd7}$   
15 0-0



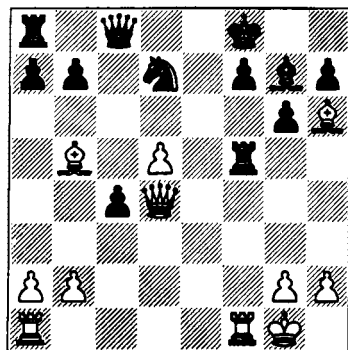
15 ...  $\text{xf8}$   
16  $\text{Qxe5}$   $\text{Wxe5}$   
17  $\text{Lf4}$  c4!

An old idea of Kapengut's. Now if White grabs the exchange with 18  $\text{Lxe5}$   $\text{Qxe5}$  the position is good for Black; e.g. 19  $\text{La4}$   $\text{Wc5+}$  20  $\text{Qh1}$   $\text{Nd8}$  rounding up the d-pawn and giving Black a fantastic endgame. Otherwise 18  $\text{Qxd7}$   $\text{Wc5+}$  19  $\text{Qh1}$   $\text{Qxd5}$  20  $\text{Wg4}$  f5 and Black regains the piece.

18  $\text{Wd4}$   $\text{Lf5}$   
19  $\text{Lh6?}$  (D)

This idea turns out badly but 19  $\text{Wxc4}$   $\text{Wxc4}$  20  $\text{Lxc4}$   $\text{Lxb2}$  is fine for Black.

19 ...  $\text{Lxh6}$



20 ♖xd7 ♔g7!

A nice tactic missed by White.

21 ♜xg7+ ♔xg7

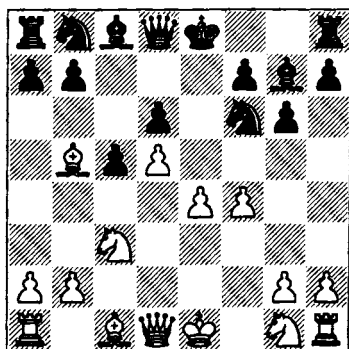
22 ♔xc8 ♜xf1+

23 ♔xf1 ♜xc8

Black has a winning endgame, although he only managed to **draw** after another forty moves. In sympathy, I'll spare you the rest of the game.

Well that was heavy going but I hope you now feel reasonably confident should anyone spring the Mikenas at you. Who knows, this system has been out of fashion for so long that it could be due for revival!

- |        |      |
|--------|------|
| 1 d4   | ♘f6  |
| 2 c4   | c5   |
| 3 d5   | e6   |
| 4 ♖c3  | exd5 |
| 5 cxd5 | d6   |
| 6 e4   | g6   |
| 7 f4   | ♗g7  |
| 8 ♖b5+ |      |

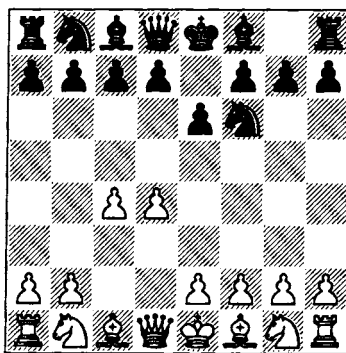


First of all, why does this system deserve such a bloodthirsty name? Well, because it has done so much damage to Benoni players in recent years. In the past it has been described as the 'Taimanov Attack' or just '8 ♖b5+', but neither do justice to the vicious nature of the system. A decade ago, British grandmaster John Nunn told me that he was giving up the Benoni because he could not cope with 8 ♖b5+, and it remains the bane of the Modern Benoni today.

By flicking out the bishop to give a check on b5, White causes

considerable disruption in the Black camp. The general consensus is that Black must block the check with the knight on f6, but this impedes the development of the c8 bishop and b8 knight. White then has time to develop behind the huge pawn centre and prepare a push with e4-e5 or f4-f5. White seems to be having all the fun: a huge position, the initiative and the prospect of a deadly attack! Just how fearsome this system has become can be deduced by the move order that most Benoni players now reluctantly adopt...

- |      |                 |
|------|-----------------|
| 1 d4 | ♘f6             |
| 2 c4 | e6 (not 2...c5) |



The idea of this move order is to bluff White into continuing with 3 ♖f3 so that after 3...c5 there is no chance of being hit by e4, f4 and ♖b5+.

But what if White bites the bullet with 3 ♖c3 instead? Well many (ex-)Benoni players lose heart and play 3...♗b4 – the Nimzo-Indian Defence! Alternatively, players seek to enter the Benoni via the King's Indian (as in the last chapter) which also cuts out the 8 ♗b5+ systems.

But is 8 ♗b5+ so dangerous for the Benoni that we need to go off and play a completely different (and less fun) opening like the Nimzo-Indian? Objectively, yes. This system does seem to offer White excellent attacking prospects and a string of White victories at grandmaster level bear this out. But most of us playing the Benoni will not have to face a thoroughly prepared Kasparov. Although White does have a powerful attack, Black's position is surprisingly resilient and there are chances to counterattack. Furthermore, White's position can suffer from the *spring effect* – it can easily bounce back in White's face! While at the top White is faring better, at lower levels I think that chances are more balanced. It can be difficult for White to

maintain his attacking momentum and keep control of his inflated position. If the Benoni player is well acquainted with the tricks and traps in these positions, then he should still score well.

The real problem after 8 ♗b5+ is that the 'natural' way to block the check with 8...♗bd7 seems to fail tactically. I have spent several years trying to make this move work for Black but the objective conclusion is that the move is unsound. That being said, I have never lost with 8...♗bd7 and it has notched up several master scalps for me. The variations are very complex and can be a potential mine-field for the unprepared White player. Just in case you are tempted to have a fling with 8...♗bd7, I'm giving away all my secrets in Games 6 and 7.

Games 8-11 form the main line of this system, where Black blocks with 8...♗fd7. This is essential reading for anyone prepared to face 8 ♗b5+. The name of the game is survival but if you can confuse, bluff or bamboozle White you may find yourself coming out on top most of the time!

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### Game 6

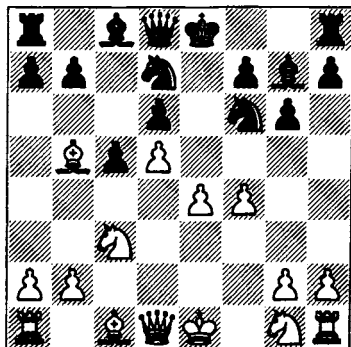
P. Littlewood – Norwood

Commonwealth Ch., London 1985

1 d4	♗f6
2 c4	e6
3 ♖c3	

The 2...e6 bluff doesn't come off on this occasion ... but in those days I was bold.

3 ...	c5
4 d5	exd5
5 cxd5	d6
6 e4	g6
7 f4	g7
8 b5+	bd7



Blocking with the bishop is considered bad by theory after 8...bd7 9 e5 d5 10 f3. Now 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 0-0 12 0-0 (grabbing the piece might be dangerous: 12 bxd7 dxd7 13 g4 dxe5 14 gxh5 dxf3+ 15 xf3 d4 and White's king will remain in the centre for some time) 12...g4 13 e2 xf3 14 xf3 xe5 15 xh5 and the shattering of Black's kingside pawns will mean a lasting disadvantage.

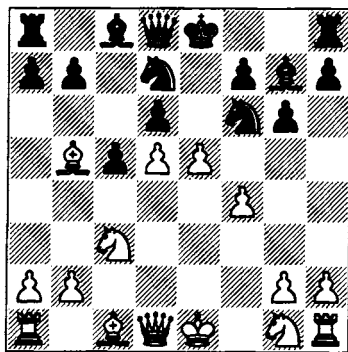
Alternatively Black can go kamikaze by playing immediately 10...0-0, when 11 bxd7 dxd7 12 g4 wins a piece and Black would seem in dire straits. Although theory stops here maybe it's not so clear; e.g. 12...dxf4 13 xf4 dxe5 14 g5 b6 and Black has two pawns for the piece and the

white king is rather loose.

Another try is 12...dxe5 13 gxh5 e4 14 d5 (if 14 dxe4 e8 will regain the piece) 14...xc3+ 15 bxc3 h6. The position is desperately complicated but White seems to emerge on top; e.g. 16 d3 h4+ 17 d2 e3! 18 xe3 fe8 19 f3 e7 20 d1, followed by 0-0.

In conclusion, 8...bd7 is not for the faint-hearted, but it might be a good way to surprise your opponent. Nobody seems to have looked at the move for over a decade and there may be some potential in the new ideas above.

9 e5



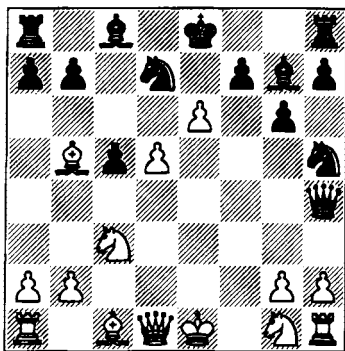
White must exploit the pinned knight before Black castles and gains the initiative.

9 ...	dxe5
10 fxe5	d5
11 e6	

The other move, 11 d3, is not frightening; e.g. 11...0-0 12 g5 f6 and Black is fine.

11 ... h4+





I modestly christened this move the 'Norwood Attack' after stumbling across it in a game against Grandmaster Jim Plaskett in 1983. Hitherto, the usual move was 11...fxe6, which is considered in Game 7.

### 12 g3

Nigel Short once suggested 12 ♖d2 here, but it looks rather dangerous; e.g. 12...fxe6 13 dxe6 0-0! and Black jettisons material but the white king looks very vulnerable.

### 12 ... ♘xg3

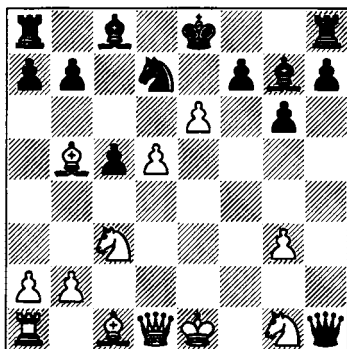
### 13 hxg3

The usual trick of 13 ♘f3, hitting the queen, fails here because of 13...♙xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♜e4+ and Black is winning material.

### 13 ... ♜xh1

The alternative is 13...♜xg3+. Now 14 ♖d2 ♙xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♜g2+ 16 ♘e2! (if 16 ♜e2 then 16...♜xd5+ 17 ♖c2 ♜xe6 and Black has plenty of pawns for the piece) 16...♜xd5+ 17 ♖c2 fxe6. It might appear that Black is doing okay here but White has a powerful

move to keep the advantage: 18 ♘f4! ♜xd1 19 ♜xd1 ♜e7 when Black has four pawns for the piece but White's activity gives him a clear edge.



### 14 ♙e3!

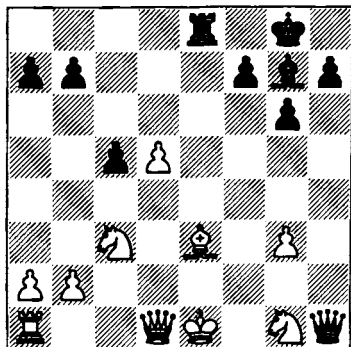
This powerful move brings the whole system with 8...♘bd7 into question. In the early days everyone used to play 14 exd7+, but since the knight is pinned White should be in no rush to capture it. After 14 exd7+ ♙xd7 15 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 16 ♜g4+ play continues 16...f5 (16...♖d8 is a mistake in view of 17 ♙g5+ f6 18 0-0-0 and White has a vicious attack) 17 ♜a4+ ♖c8 18 ♙e3 ♙xc3+ 19 bxc3 ♜xd5 20 ♜d1 ♜c6 21 ♜xc6+ bxc6 22 ♙xc5. I have had this position on several occasions and practical results seem to favour Black.

### 14 ... 0-0

The only way to make a fight of it. 14...♙xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♜e4 16 ♜f3 ♜xf3 17 ♘xf3 fxe6 18 dxe6 0-0 has been tried for Black, but my feeling is that 19 ♘g5! should be

winning for White; e.g. 19...♖e8  
20 0-0-0 leaves Black hopelessly  
pinned.

15 exd7      ♖xd7  
16 ♖xd7      ♗ae8  
17 ♖xe8      ♗xe8

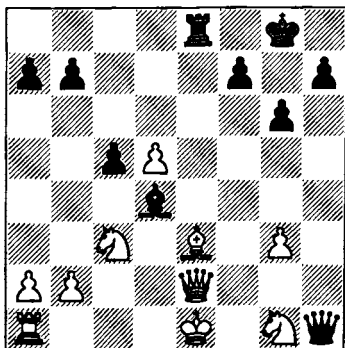


Black has invested two pieces  
to control the e-file – no mean  
cost!

18 ♖e2

The best move; 18 ♖d2 ♖xc3+  
19 bxc3 ♗xd5+ 20 ♖c1 ♗xd1+ 21  
♖xd1 ♗xe2 22 ♖e2 should only be  
a drawn endgame.

18 ...      ♖d4



Better than 18...♖h6, to which  
White can reply 19 ♖xh6 with an  
easy win.

19 0-0-0!

An excellent move, returning a  
piece but regaining control of the  
position. The alternative, 19 ♖d2,  
leads to some fascinating play after  
19...b5! (winning the queen is  
no use; e.g. 19...♖xe3+ 20 ♗xe3  
♗xe3 21 ♖xe3 and White puts the  
rook on d1 and marches the d-  
pawn forward. Of course, Black  
can check the white king but it  
moves to the safety of a1) 20 ♖d1  
b4 21 ♖xd4 ♗xe2+ 22 ♖gxe2  
bxc3+ 23 ♖xc3 ♗xd5+. Having  
eliminated the dangerous d-pawn  
Black can fight on.

19 ...      ♗xe3

Or 19...♖xe3+ 20 ♖b1 and it is  
Black, not White, who is pinned.

20 ♗c4?

I would like to believe that  
White had no choice here but,  
alas, there is a deadly improve-  
ment: 20 ♗c2! and Black's initia-  
tive quickly peters out. White  
intends simply ♖ge2 with con-  
solidation – the d-pawn is also a  
runner. This move puts the whole  
circus out of business.

20 ...      a6!

Even when Benoni positions go  
wild, one should not forget the ba-  
sic strategy: expand on the queen-  
side.

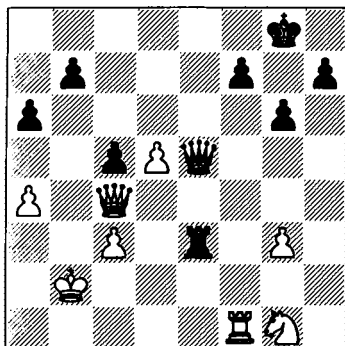
21 a4      ♗h6

22 ♖b1      ♗h5

The key to Black's strategy is to  
prevent White from consolidating

by bringing out the g1 knight, but in fact 23 ♖ge2 ♙xc3 24 g4! followed by ♖xc3 wins for White.

23 ♖f1 ♙xc3  
24 bxc3 ♜e5!  
25 ♔b2



Now is the time to employ another Benoni weapon: queenside deflection.

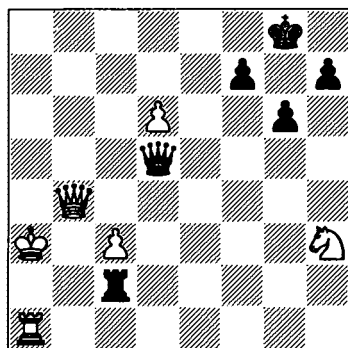
25...b5 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♜xc5 b4 28 ♜xb4 ♙xg3 29 d6! ♙g2+ 30 ♔a3 ♜d5 31 ♙a1 ♙c2?

A blunder; after 31...♜c6 the position is unclear.

32 ♖h3??

A disastrous move. Instead 32 d7! should win; e.g. 32...♜xd7 33 ♔b3 with 34 ♙a8+ and 35 ♜f8+

driving my king into the open.



32...♜d2!

Now White is losing since the king cannot be defended without loss of material.

33 ♔a4 ♙xc3 34 ♙a3 ♜d1+ 35 ♔b5 ♜d5+ 36 ♔b6 ♜c6+ 37 ♔a7 ♜d7+ 38 ♔b6 ♙c6+ 39 ♔b5 ♜b7+ 40 ♔a4 ♙a6+ 41 ♔b3 ♙b6 42 ♙a8+ ♔g7 White resigned

Not the soundest of games perhaps, but a good example of how wild and exciting the Benoni can be. This game emphasises that even when White seems to have overrun the Benoni position, there are always chances to find counterplay.

## Game 7

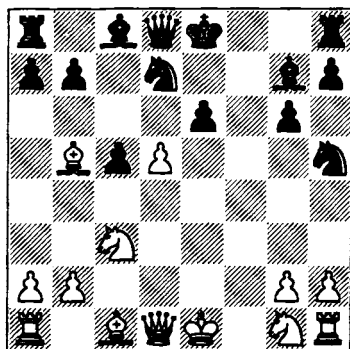
Mestel – Hodgson

British Ch., Southport 1983

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 c5 4 d5 cxd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7 8 ♙b5+ ♖bd7 9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 ♖h5 11 e6)

11 ... fxe6

Black's idea is to open up the f-file for the rook and begin a swift attack on the exposed white king.



12 dxe6 0-0

13 ♖f3!

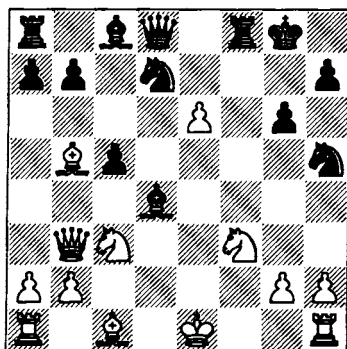
A much safer move than grabbing the knight with 13 exd7.

13 ... ♗d4

14 ♜b3?

This seems to give Black good counterplay so White needs to find an alternative. 14 ♗e3 is an ingenious idea; if 14...♗xe3 15 exd7 is winning for White. However, I think that Black can stay alive with 14...♗e5!?, e.g. 15 ♖xd4 ♜h4+ with endless complications.

But White has a vastly superior idea to both 14 ♜b3 and 14 ♗e3: 14 ♗g5!. I cannot see a good response for Black here; e.g. 14...♖df6 (14...♜b6 15 ♜b3 is devastating) 15 ♜e2! ♜e7 16 0-0-0! when White's king is safely castled and Black is unable to grab the e-pawn as 16...♗xe6 17 ♜he1 creates a deadly pin (17...♖g7 is met by either 18 ♗h6 or 18 ♖xd4). Black may be able to grovel here with 16...♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♖g7, but after 18 ♜he1 few people would choose to defend Black's position.

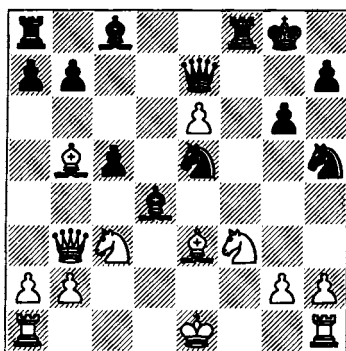


14 ...

♜e7

15 ♗e3

♖e5?

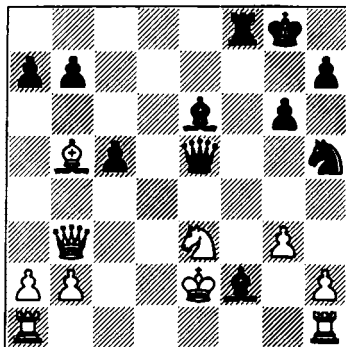


Some years after this game I noticed that Black had a dramatic improvement here: 15...♜xf3!!.. Now if White simply recaptures with 16 gxf3 then 16...♖e5 when White's e- and f-pawns are attacked and Black has excellent compensation for the exchange.

So 16 exd7+ ♖g7 17 gxf3 ♜xe3+ 18 ♖e2 ♜f2+ 19 ♖d2 ♗xd7 20 ♗xd7 (20 ♜af1 ♜e3+ 21 ♜xe3 ♗xe3 22 ♖xe3 ♜e8+ 23 ♖d2 ♗xb5 looks fine for Black) 20...♜d8 21 ♜e6 ♖f4! and despite the rook

less Black has fighting chances.

16	♖xe5	♙xe3
17	♜d5	♗h4+
18	g3	♙f2+
19	♚e2	♗e4+
20	♜e3	♗xe5
21	e7+	♙e6
22	exf8♗+	♗xf8



23 ♗xe6+!

A nice move which liquidates into a good endgame for White. The rest, as they say, is just technique:

23...♗xe6 24 ♖c4 ♗xc4 25 ♖xc4 ♙d4 26 ♗af1 ♗e8+ 27 ♜d2 ♜f6 28 ♗e1 ♗d8 29 ♜c1 ♜d5 30 ♗hf1 b5 31 ♜a3 ♜b4 32 ♗e7 a6 33 ♜b1 ♜d3 34 ♗e6 ♜xb2 35 ♗xa6 b4 36 ♜c2 ♙g7 37 ♜e3 ♙d4 38 ♜c2 ♙g7 39 ♜e3 ♙d4 40 ♜g4 ♜c4 41 ♜c1 ♙g7 42 ♜f6+ ♜h8 43 ♗e1 ♙h6+ 44 ♜c2 ♜e3+ 45 ♜b3 ♜g7 46 ♜e4 c4+ 47 ♜a4 ♗d7 48 g4 ♙f4 49 ♜c5 ♗e7 50 ♜e6+ ♗xe6 51 ♗xe6 ♜d5 52 ♜b5 Black resigned

The conclusion is that 11...fxe6 is a lot of fun, but unless you have an answer to 14 ♙g5!, *forget it!*

## Game 8

### Kasparov – Nunn

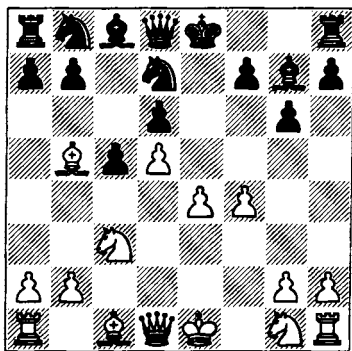
#### Lucerne Olympiad 1982

We now turn our attention to systems where Black meets 8 ♙b5+ with 8...♜fd7. This avoids the immediate sacrifice of material associated with the alternatives, but for various reasons it still lacks popularity at international level. Without doubt, the following game in which John Nunn, a top grandmaster and expert tactician, was destroyed on the Black side has contributed to this dubious reputation.

(1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7 8 ♙b5+)

8 ... ♜fd7

The main problem with this move is that it blocks the development of the queenside pieces. If Black returns the knight to f6 and White retreats the bishop to, say, e2, then White has gained a move (♜f6-d7-f6 is three moves, ♙b5-e2 is only two) over the lines in the previous chapter. The knight is



not badly placed on d7 – the snag is that the bishop needs to be on g4. If Black can untangle effectively then the system should not be dangerous, but in practice this is hard to achieve.

**9 a4**

This is the best move for White. There is no reason for him to play 9 ♘f3, allowing Black to expand rapidly with 9...a6 and 10...b5. If White retreats the bishop immediately to d3 or e2, then Black is not obliged to play ...a7-a6. Moreover, the bishop exerts an influence along the a4-e8 diagonal, as this game demonstrates...

**9 ... ♘a6**

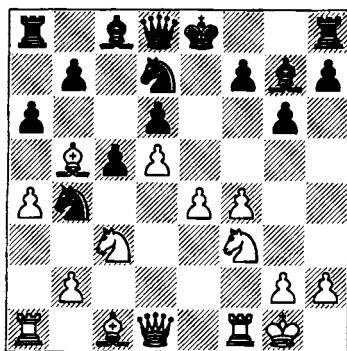
Other moves for Black are considered in Games 9-11. Black's plan here is to manoeuvre the knight to b4, which has become an outpost after 9 a4. This idea is logical but time-consuming; meanwhile White has time to castle and prepare a central push.

**10 ♘f3 ♘b4**

**11 0-0 a6?!**

This is a dubious attempt to

catch White out by adopting an unusual move order. The normal sequence is 11...0-0 12 ♖e1 and after 12...a6, the bishop drops back to f1. The point of 13 ♗f1 (as opposed to 13 ♗e2) is that it does not obstruct the rook along the e-file – remember that White is playing for the e4-e5 push. After 11...a6 White changes plan and takes advantage of Black's delay in castling.



**12 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7**

**13 f5**

Since Benoni players spend half their lives watching out for the e4-e5 push, it is very easy to forget that f4-f5 is an option. This move is more likely to be strong if Black does not have a knight on d7, protecting the e5 and f6 squares. The f5 push also opens the c1-h6 diagonal so that White's dark-squared bishop can enter the game, usually via g5. This particular position is exactly the right scenario for the f-pawn thrust to work.

13 ... 0-0

14 ♖g5

This move forces Black to make a concession. The queen cannot move in view of 15 f6 shutting Black's dark-squared bishop out of the game and 14...♗f6 is also problematic; e.g. 15 ♖d2 ♗xg5 16 ♜xg5 h6 17 f6! winning since 17...hxg5 18 ♖xg5 will soon result in the black king being mated.

14 ... f6

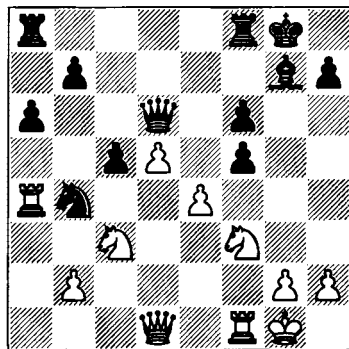
If you have to play this move in the Modern Benoni, you know that something has gone seriously wrong. The key to Black's position is the activity of the dark-squared bishop on g7, and ...f7-f6 blocks it out of the action. The only occasion on which ...f7-f6 is permissible is when it can be followed up with ...f6-f5, freeing the bishop again. With White's pawn on f5, though, this is an unlikely prospect.

15 ♗f4 gxf5?

Black's position is left in ruins after this move, so an alternative must be found. 15...♖e7 or 15...♗e8 both look unpleasant, but in these positions Black must sit tight and bear the pain. White still has to force home the attack, and this cannot be done without risk. When things go wrong in the Benoni it's usually better to dig in rather than panic and open up the position in White's favour.

16 ♗xd6 ♗xa4

17 ♖xa4 ♖xd6



18 ♜h4!

A nice move which leaves us in no doubt as to who has won the tactical exchanges. Black's problem is that a white knight will land on f5 where it can terrorise all the important squares: d6, e7, g7, h6, d4 and e3. With the g7 bishop looking like a pawn that cannot advance, Black is busted.

18 ... fxe4

19 ♜f5 ♖d7

White could meet 19...♖e5 with 20 ♖g4 combining a positional bind with a kingside attack; e.g. 20...♗f7 21 ♜h6+ winning the exchange.

20 ♜xe4 ♖h8

21 ♜xc5

Black resigned in this sorry position. If 21...♖xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 23 ♜e6 wins the exchange.

Not surprisingly this game has been a great advert for the 8 ♗b5+ system and has caused many players to abandon the Benoni completely. I would agree that ...♜a6-b4 is not a good plan for Black, but I feel that he could

have offered sterner resistance in this game. Still, I suppose that is

easy for me to say ... it wasn't me facing Kasparov's attack!

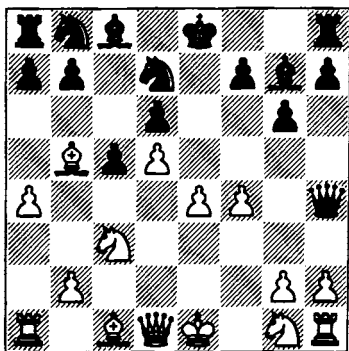
## Game 9

### H. Olafsson – Psakhis

#### Moscow GMA 1989

(1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5  
exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♙g7  
8 ♖b5+ ♘fd7 9 a4)

9 ... ♗h4+



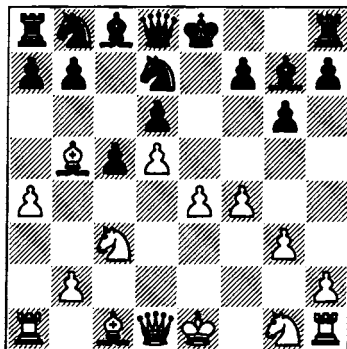
The idea behind this check is to provoke 10 g3, which weakens White's kingside and prevents the light-squared bishop being deployed to h4 via e3-f2 (Game 11 shows how effective this plan is in action). The drawback, of course, is the time factor; White gets developed even quicker. Although I have never employed the plan of 9... ♗h4+, it does have its adherents.

10 g3 ♗d8

No, this is not the normal way to play. 10... ♗e7 would seem to make more sense, but note that

11 ♘f3 ♙xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♗xe4+ is bad for Black in view of 13 ♙f2 0-0 14 ♖e1 ♗f5 15 ♙f1!. White is preparing c4 and ♖b2, after which the bishop will be murderous along the long diagonal. After 11 ♘f3 0-0 White retains the initiative.

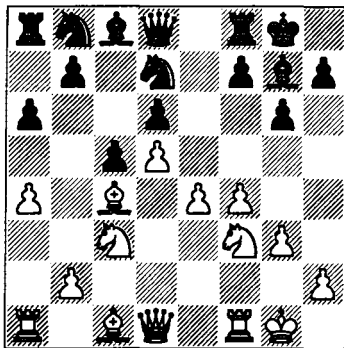
As to 10... ♗d8, it is hard to believe that it was worth a full move to provoke 11 g3, but who knows?



11 ♘f3 0-0  
12 0-0 a6  
13 ♙c4 (D)

At first sight this appears to be an awkward square for the bishop, as it is blocked in by the d5 pawn. However, remember that White is looking towards the e4-e5 break and then perhaps d5-d6; so the





bishop has hidden potential along the a2-g8 diagonal. Always be aware of this!

13 ... ♖b6

14 ♙e2 ♙g4

Black has finally developed the bishop though the knight is not well placed on b6 since it prevents the thematic ...b7-b5 advance.

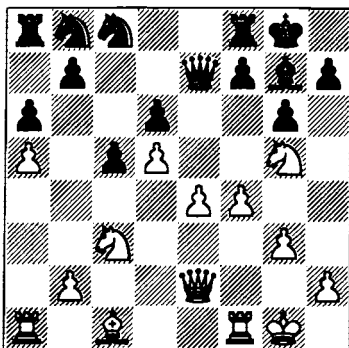
15 ♘g5

White wants to preserve the knight, which is needed to support the e4-e5 push.

15 ... ♙xe2

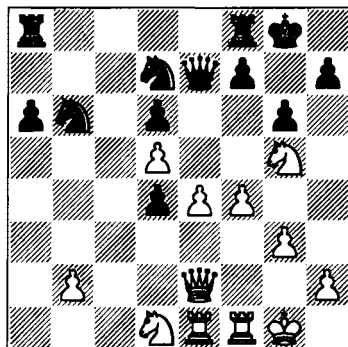
16 ♙xe2 ♙e7

17 a5 ♘c8!



Retreating the knight to c8 keeps the d7 square free for the b8 knight; and the c8 knight can enter the game later after ...b7-b5, axb6 ♘cxb6.

18 ♙d2	♘d7
19 ♙ae1	b5
20 axb6	♙d4+
21 ♙e3	♘cxb6
22 ♙xd4	cxd4
23 ♘d1	



A recurring theme in the Benoni is Black allowing his pawns to be doubled on the d-file with ♙xd4. Okay, the d4 pawn is very weak and could easily be lost, but this is offset by the tactical disruption created in White's camp. After ...cxd4 the c5 square is free for a black knight, which can then put pressure on the e4 pawn. It is impossible for White to hold the e-pawn and round-up the d-pawn simultaneously. But beware: if you are unable to muster enough tactics to bewilder White, the d-pawn could just drop off the board.

23 ... ♖c5

24 b4!

A powerful idea that Black had overlooked; the d-pawn quickly becomes vulnerable.

24 ... ♖ca4

25 ♖f3 ♗a7

Another tactical possibility after ...cxd4, is to utilise the a7-g1 diagonal. Now 26 ♖xd4 is met by 26...♖xd5.

26 ♗d3!

Ending Black's tricks; now the d-pawn must fall.

26 ... a5

27 bxa5 ♗xa5

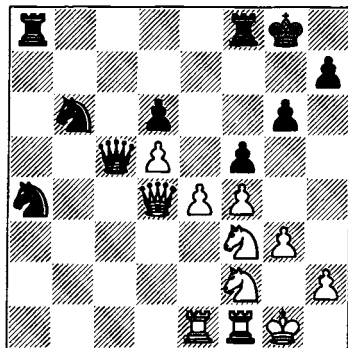
28 ♖f2 ♗c5

29 ♗xd4

Black has lost the pawn, but there is still a chance of saving the game.

29 ... f5!

In the endgame White's centre becomes a target, especially the d5 pawn. The ensuing liquidation to three pawns against two on the kingside makes a draw the most



likely result:

30 ♖c1 ♗xd4 31 ♖xd4 fxe4 32 ♖xe4 ♖xd5 33 ♖xd6 ♖ac3! 34 ♖c1 ♖fd8 35 ♖e4 ♖a6 36 f5 gxf5 Draw agreed

White could have pressed his opponent, but with correct play there are no winning chances left in the position.

So 9...♗h4+ is playable, although it seems that White can still gain the initiative. The final two games are my own attempts to develop a credible system for Black against 8 ♖b5+.

## Game 10

Davis – Norwood

World Junior Ch., Adelaide 1988

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♖g7 8 ♖b5+ ♖fd7 9 a4)

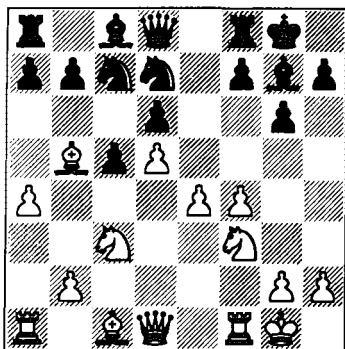
9 ... 0-0

10 ♖f3 ♖a6

11 0-0 ♖c7 (D)

This move gives Black's plan its character. By placing knights

on d7 and c7 Black pursues the now familiar policy of restraining e4-e5 (with the d7 knight) and preparing ...b7-b5 (with the c7 knight). However, it must be noted that preventing e4-e5 is much more difficult when White keeps the knight on f3. Moreover,



the slightly cumbersome positioning of the black knights means that White has tactical possibilities based on e4-e5 d6xe5, and now d5-d6, hitting the knight on c7. Always be on the look-out for this pawn break by White, especially if there is a bishop on c4; play often becomes highly tactical.

12 ♜c2

A wimpish continuation; the improvement 12 ♖e3 is considered in the next game. The e4 pawn is not in need of further support, and c2 is not a particularly useful square for the queen in any case.

12 ... a6

13 ♖c4 ♜b8

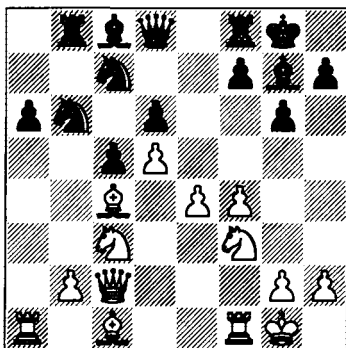
Black has a clear plan: expand with ...b7-b5, a flank attack which will undermine White's pawn centre.

14 a5

A necessary move; but not one that should discourage Black from carrying on regardless.

14 ... b5

15 axb6 ♖xb6



Black has won the opening bout. Although the a6 pawn is a target, this is more than compensated for by Black's pressure along the b-file. Moreover, the knights are becoming active, with the c7 knight ready to hop into b5 at an opportune moment. The key factor, however, is that Black has diverted the struggle to the queenside, which makes it harder for White to carry through the central advance.

16 b3

If 16 ♖d3 Black can continue his expansion with 16...c4 and then ...♜c7-b5.

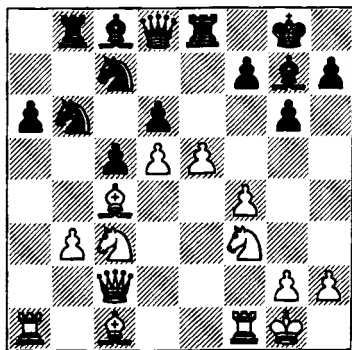
16 ... ♜e8

17 e5!? (D)

Offering a pawn that should not be taken; rarely is it a good idea to exchange the g7 bishop for a knight, even if induced by a pawn offer – the dark squares become too weak.

17 ... ♖g4

Our standard move to dislodge



the f3 knight; now Black threatens simply ... $\text{xf3}$  and ... $\text{dxe5}$  to win the pawn. Note that 18  $\text{exd6}$  can be met by 18... $\text{b5!}$  exploiting the pin on the long diagonal.

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| 18 $\text{wf2}$  | $\text{wd7}$  |
| 19 $\text{de4}$  | $\text{xf3}$  |
| 20 $\text{wxf3}$ | $\text{dxe5}$ |
| 21 $\text{fxe5}$ | $\text{xe5}$  |

Another standard idea in these systems: White sacrifices a pawn for an initiative, but this time Black is well placed to defend.

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 22 $\text{ah6}$ | $\text{f5!}$ |
|-----------------|--------------|

Taking the offensive; now White has no more tricks on f6, and 23  $\text{d6+}$  is met by 23... $\text{dxc4}$ .

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 23 $\text{dc3}$ | $\text{db5!}$ |
|-----------------|---------------|

Suddenly White's position is full of holes. The bishop on e5 is a monster, defending important dark squares and creating chaos with the pin on a1.

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| 24 $\text{Ea1}$  | $\text{dxc4}$ |
| 25 $\text{bxc4}$ | $\text{dxc3}$ |
| 26 $\text{Exc3}$ | $\text{d4+}$  |
| 27 $\text{gh1}$  | $\text{xc3}$  |
| 28 $\text{wxc3}$ | $\text{we7}$  |
| 29 $\text{gg1}$  | $\text{Eb7}$  |

**White resigned**

This game illustrates how easy it is for White to go astray in this system. Black's fianchetto bishop is a dynamic piece, useful for both attack and defence. The knights on d7 and c7 can also terrorise White by leaping into squares such as b6 and c4 or b5 and d4, while covering the important f6 and e5 squares. White has to proceed very accurately in order to push the central pawns forward, and this can rarely be achieved without risk.

Here is another example of this system, but this time White's treatment is exemplary.

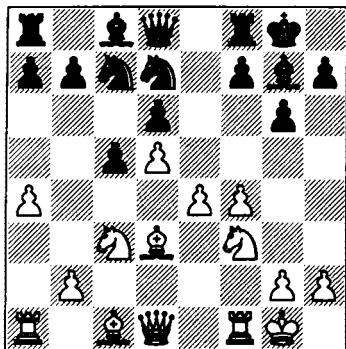
## Game 11

### Levitt – Norwood

#### London (WF&W) 1988

- (1  $\text{d4}$   $\text{df6}$  2  $\text{c4}$   $\text{e6}$  3  $\text{dc3}$   $\text{c5}$  4  $\text{d5}$   $\text{exd5}$  5  $\text{cxd5}$   $\text{d6}$  6  $\text{e4}$   $\text{g6}$  7  $\text{f4}$   $\text{ag7}$  8  $\text{ab5+}$   $\text{dfd7}$  9  $\text{a4}$  0-0 10  $\text{df3}$   $\text{da6}$  11 0-0  $\text{dc7}$ )  
12  $\text{ad3}$  (D)

Another tricky move is 12  $\text{ac4}$ , giving Black the added worry that the e4-e5 advance could open an attack by the bishop along the a2-g8 diagonal. Perhaps 12... $\text{db6}$



and then ...♗g4 is okay for Black – the b6 knight can return to d7 whereupon the e5 square is well covered.

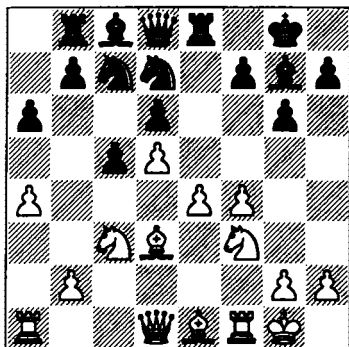
12 ... ♖e8

13 ♖d2

The start of a very imaginative plan by White.

13 ... a6

14 ♖e1 ♖b8



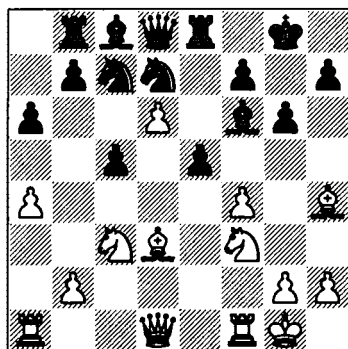
15 e5!

A timely break; White will not lose a pawn in view of the tactical resource he has prepared.

15 ... dxe5

16 ♖h4 ♖f6

17 d6!



17 ...

♗e6

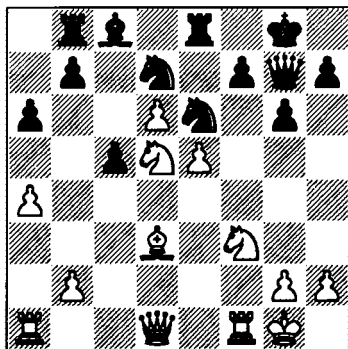
18 ♖xf6

♗xf6

19 ♘d5

♗g7

20 fxe5



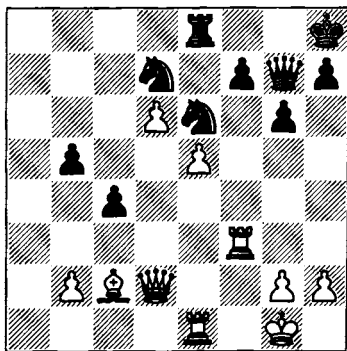
White's position looks tremendous and during the game I felt that I was already lost here and that my whole system had been totally refuted. Perhaps so, but I should have remembered the maxim that there is always hope in the Modern Benoni. Black's best try was 20...♘d4 (threatening simply ...♘xf3+ followed by

...♖xe5); e.g. 21 ♖e7+ ♖h8 22 ♖xd4 cxd4 23 e6 fxe6, when White has a strong initiative but must still prove the point (...♖e5 will be a good defensive move). Instead I opted for a passive move which leaves the game in White's hands...

20 ... ♖h8  
21 ♖d2 b5?

Again 21...♖d4 was the only way to make a fight of it.

22 axb5 axb5  
23 ♖ae1 c4  
24 ♖c2 ♖b7  
25 ♖c7! ♖xf3  
26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8  
27 ♖xf3



My position is hopeless, and though I struggled on for another twenty moves there is no need for further comment:

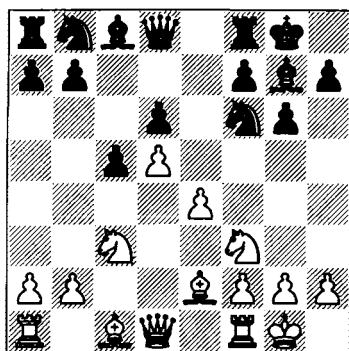
27...♖xe5 28 ♖fe3 f6 29 h3  
♖d8 30 ♖d5 ♖d7 31 ♖xe5 fxe5  
32 ♖xe5+ ♖g7 33 ♖f6 ♖a7+ 34  
♖h1 ♖g8 35 ♖e7 ♖a1+ 36 ♖h2  
♖a8 37 ♖xg6 ♖f8 38 ♖xf8 ♖xf8  
39 ♖e4 ♖d8 40 d7 b4 41 ♖c6 c3  
42 bxc3 bxc3 43 ♖e3 c2 44 ♖c3  
♖e6 45 ♖a4 ♖g7 46 ♖xc2 ♖f6 47  
♖c8 ♖e7 48 ♖g3 ♖f8 49 ♖g4  
Black resigned

A very well-played game by White, and one which leaves me with doubts about the whole system. My hunch is that even before 20...♖h8 (where 20...♖d4 would have been better) Black had possible improvements. If Black can survive the rapid tactical onslaught with e4-e5 then the whole 8 ♖b5+ system may not be as good for White as is commonly believed.

This concludes our survey of the 'Flick-Knife Attack', the most feared system against the Modern Benoni. No-one can deny that this system is dangerous, and I have no blueprint of the correct way for Black to play. But I hope that the above games will offer readers some new ideas and demonstrate that it is not all one-way traffic!

We take the following position as the starting point of the Classical variation:

1	d4	♘f6
2	c4	c5
3	d5	e6
4	♘c3	exd5
5	cxtd5	d6
6	e4	g6
7	♘f3	♙g7
8	♙e2	0-0
9	0-0	



As the name 'Classical' might suggest, this is the traditional, reliable way for White to meet the Modern Benoni. White prepares the central advance more slowly, and is well placed to restrain the ...b7-b5 thrust. His plan is to gradually squeeze Black by consolidating his central space advantage.

Essentially Black has three possible ways of playing against

the Classical, and this chapter is divided accordingly:

a) with ...♙g4 (Games 12-13). This is the most popular method; Black intends to exchange the bishop along the g4-d1 diagonal before continuing with the usual strategy of queenside expansion.

b) with ...♘a6 (Games 14-15). Another reliable option: the knight heads for c7 where it is well placed to support ...b7-b5 and eyes the d5 pawn if White pushes e4-e5.

c) with ...♘bd7 (Games 16-17). Once very popular, this system is rarely seen nowadays at international level. Black gets lively play but the experts' view is that White is doing well.

## Systems with...♙g4

Black's light-squared bishop can be a difficult piece in the Benoni. Although it may sometimes spring into the game with devastating effect, it spends much of the opening on the sidelines. White's pawns on d5 and e4 leave the bishop with only the d7 and g4 squares along the c8-h3 diagonal. On d7 it can support the ...b7-b5 advance, but this square is often required by a knight. Hence the idea of ...♙g4, with a view to exchanging with the knight on f3

or the bishop on e2. Which piece it is exchanged for will alter the

course of the game and we consider an example of each.

## Game 12

### Skembris – Psakhis

#### Novi Sad Olympiad 1990

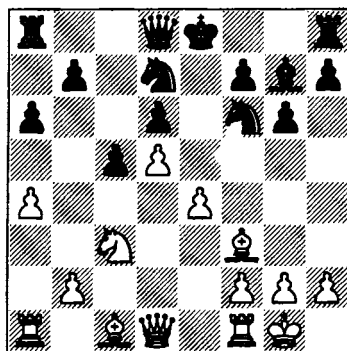
1	d4	♟f6
2	c4	e6
3	♞f3	c5
4	d5	d6
5	♞c3	exd5
6	cx d5	g6
7	e4	a6

Black is fiddling with the move order to get in ...♞g4 (see Game 38 for a further explanation of this). My only word of caution if you decide to play around with moves like an early ...a7-a6, is that sometimes White can go for a quick central blast with e4-e5 – always bear this in mind when delaying kingside development!

8	a4	♞g4
9	♞e2	♞xf3
10	♞xf3	♞bd7
11	0-0	♞g7 (D)

This is a good starting position for the variations with ...♞xf3, and it is worth making a few general observations. As usual, White has the central pawn majority and greater board room; in addition, there is the bishop pair. But it is less clear which plan White should adopt. With the knight gone from f3, the e4-e5 break seems a long way away. For the moment White must adopt a

restraining role preventing Black's queenside advance. Black, on the other hand, has the familiar plan: pressurise the e-file and give White a headache on the queenside.



12 a5

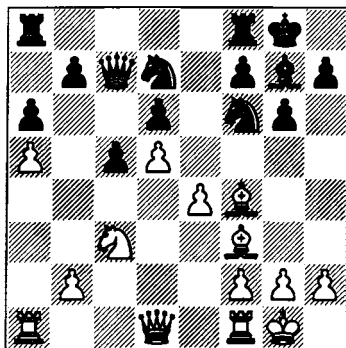
Unless the bishop was to drop back to e2, Black could easily force through ...b7-b5. This move ensures that if ...b7-b5 is played, Black's queenside pawns will be dislocated.

12	...	0-0
13	♞f4	♞c7

For the moment at least, the e5 square is well protected, and Black will soon over-protect it by ...♞fe8. Black is still preparing the ...b7-b5 advance but it must



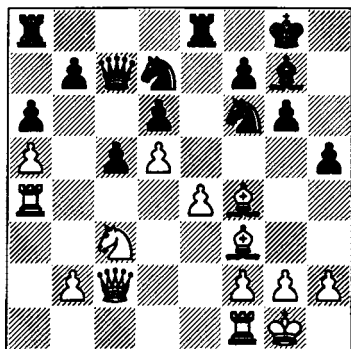
be timed correctly: if it is played too quickly then after  $axb6$  the a6 pawn could become a target. Remember also that the a5 pawn needs to be defended so the white rook is tied to the a-file.



14  $\text{Ra4}$

A rather odd-looking move, but the rook laterally defends e4 and discourages Black from any ideas of advancing c5-c4.

14 ...  $\text{Nfe8}$   
15  $\text{Wc2}$   $\text{h5!}$



An unusual move which apparently weakens the kingside. The

plus points are that it denies the g4 square to the white bishop, and gives Black the possibility of ... $\text{Ng4}$ . Sometimes the h7 square can also be a useful square to drop back to.

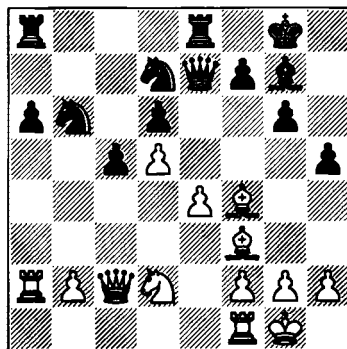
16  $\text{Nb1}$

White intends to re-deploy the knight via d2-c4, from where it could terrorise the d6 pawn, the bane of Black's camp. But with the knight on its starting square, Black seizes the opportunity to open up the position.

16 ...  $\text{b5}$   
17  $axb6$   $\text{Nxb6}$   
18  $\text{Na2}$   $\text{We7}$   
19  $\text{Nd2}$

Obviously not 19  $\text{Ne1}$  in view of 19... $\text{Nfxd5}$ .

19 ...  $\text{Nfd7}$



We still have a typically unbalanced Benoni position. Okay, the a6 pawn is weak but Black can target b2. Personally, I would always prefer to be Black in these positions; the g7 bishop is devastating along the long diagonal

and the black knights control important squares such as e5 and c4.

20 ♖fa1 ♔d4!

Suddenly the tactics are starting to appear: if 21 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 22 ♖xa6 g5 (22... ♖xd5 23 ♖xd6) 23 ♖e3 ♖xe3 24 fxe3 g4 25 ♖e2 ♖xd5! with great complications.

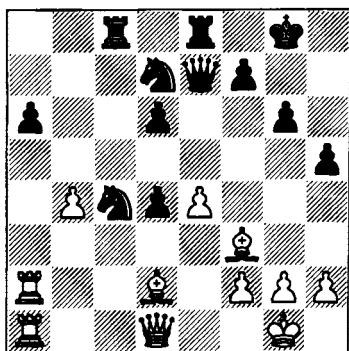
21 ♖b3 ♖xd5

22 ♖d2 ♖5b6

23 ♖xd4 cxd4

24 b4 ♖ac8

25 ♖d1 ♖c4



Black has a powerful initiative; note how the knights are dominating the white bishops. Black has also utilised the half-open e-file to the full, with pressure on e4 and threats of back-rank mates. White still has positional advantages: the bishop pair, a passed b-pawn (when the a6 pawn drops) and a better pawn structure; but these factors are more than negated by Black's immediate initiative. Psakhis's treatment of the position is exemplary: disrupt

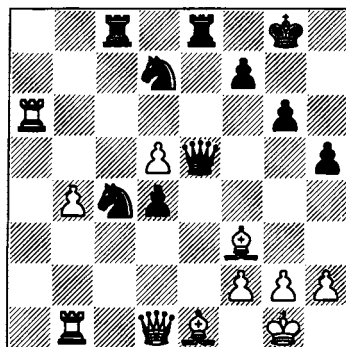
White's long-term plans by posing immediate tactical problems.

26 ♖e1 ♖f6

27 ♖b1 ♖e5

28 ♖xa6 d5!

29 exd5



29 ... ♖b2!

The knight is taboo in view of ... ♖xe1.

30 ♖d2 ♖c2!

31 ♖e6

The only way to struggle on.

31 ... ♖xe6

32 dxe6 ♖xd2

33 exd7 ♖e7

34 ♖xd2 ♖c4

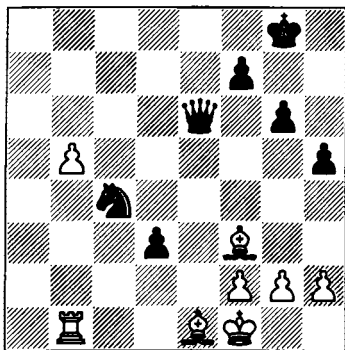
35 ♖e1 ♖xd7

36 b5 ♖e6

37 ♖f1 d3 (D)

The strength of the d-pawn makes White's position hopeless. The remaining moves were:

38 ♖d1 ♖d6 39 g3 ♖d4 40 ♖d2 ♖b2 41 ♖e3 ♖xb5 42 ♖d4 ♖h7 43 ♖e4 d2 44 ♖g2 h4 45 h3 hxg3 46 ♖f3 gxf2 47 ♖xf2 ♖b8 48 ♖e2 ♖d6 49 ♖f2 ♖e6+ White resigned



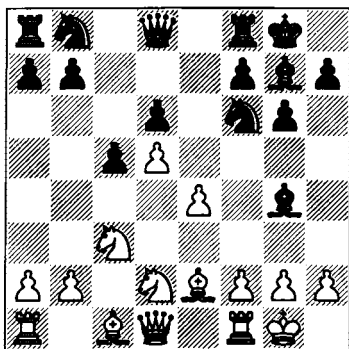
This is another Benoni masterpiece in which Black utilised threats on both sides of the board. It is also a good advert for ... $\text{g4}$

against the Classical: developing the bishop relieves any queenside congestion and assures Black of active piece play. I also think that earlier remarks ring true here, that White's position is harder to keep control of than Black's.

In the next game Black trades off the bishop for White's e2 bishop. Even after years of practical experience, it is still not clear whether it is better for White to exchange bishop for bishop or allow the exchange of bishop for knight.

### Game 13 Efimov – Gavrikov Geneva 1991

(1 d4  $\text{f6}$  2 c4 e6 3  $\text{c3}$  c5 4 d5  
exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7  $\text{e2}$   
 $\text{g7}$  8  $\text{f3}$  0-0 9 0-0  $\text{g4}$ )  
10  $\text{d2}$

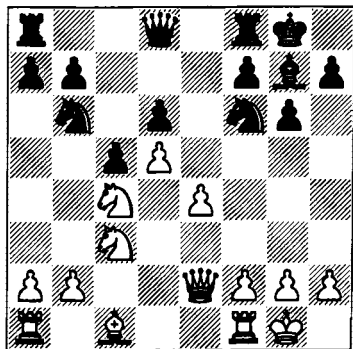


The main alternative for White here is to play 10  $\text{f4}$ . Black can

then transpose into lines similar to Game 12 with 10... $\text{xf3}$  or can pursue an independent path with 10... $\text{e8}$ ; e.g. 11  $\text{d2}$   $\text{xe2}$  12  $\text{xe2}$  a6 13 a4  $\text{h5}$  14  $\text{e3}$   $\text{d7}$ . This is a known theoretical position in which White has tried both 15 g4 and 15 a5. After 15 g4  $\text{hf6}$  the position becomes quite wild but Black should be doing fine. However, practical experience suggests that White has a slight advantage after 15 a5.

10 ...  $\text{xe2}$   
11  $\text{xe2}$   $\text{bd7}$   
12  $\text{c4}$   $\text{b6}$  (D)

This is the point. Trying to defend the d6 pawn with 12... $\text{e7}$  runs into 13  $\text{f4}$ , when Black

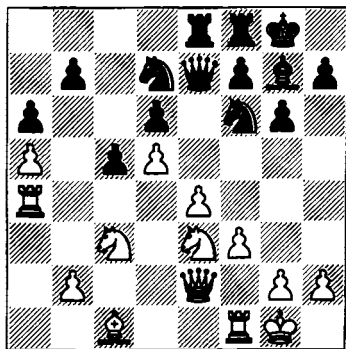


must retreat the knight to defend. The text move forces the c4 knight to stand down since an exchange would favour Black; e.g. 13  $\text{Qxb6}$   $\text{Wxb6}$  followed by  $\dots \text{f8e8}$ . Remember that White is trying to cramp Black, so exchanges will tend to free Black's position.

13  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{We7}$   
14  $\text{f3}$   $\text{f8e8!?$

An unusual idea, signalling Black's intention to play on the kingside.

15  $\text{a4}$   $\text{a6}$   
16  $\text{a5}$   $\text{Qbd7}$   
17  $\text{Na4}$

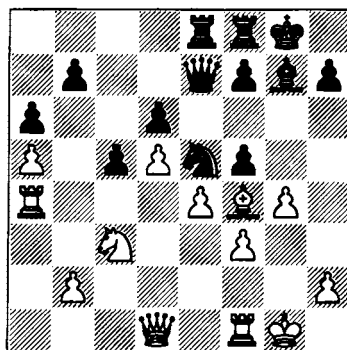


Once again White seeks to use the rook to guard the fourth rank. But White's position again looks stretched; notice how compact and cohesive the black pieces are compared to White's. This is what I mean when I suggest that Black's position is easier to play. The attack begins...

17 ...  $\text{Qh5}$   
18  $\text{g4}$   $\text{Qf4}$   
19  $\text{Wd1}$   $\text{Qe5}$   
20  $\text{Qf5}$

With the knights about to invade on d3 this move is understandable.

20 ...  $\text{gxf5}$   
21  $\text{Qxf4}$

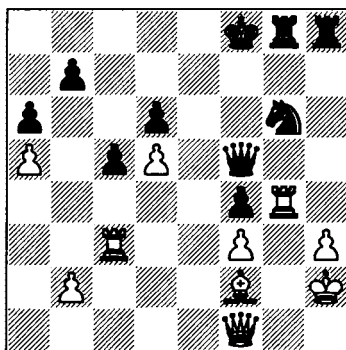
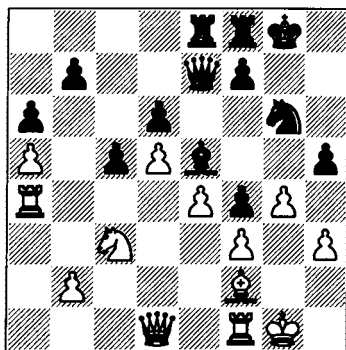


21 ...  $\text{Qg6!}$

The bishop must retreat.

22  $\text{Qg3}$   $\text{f4}$   
23  $\text{Qf2}$   $\text{h5!}$   
24  $\text{h3}$   $\text{Qe5 (D)}$

At first sight it might appear that Black is struggling here. His kingside pawns are shattered and the f4 pawn is blocking the dark-squared bishop; but Black has



total control of the e5 square, and there is no question of the e4 pawn ever advancing. Moreover, the emphasis of the game is definitely on the kingside, where it is difficult for White to deploy his pieces. Black can bring his rooks to bear on the h- and g-files and create a dangerous attack against the king.

### 25 gxh5?

White may have been suffering but opening up the kingside cannot be the best defence.

- |        |      |
|--------|------|
| 25 ... | Wg5+ |
| 26 Ah2 | Wxh5 |
| 27 Ag1 | Ag7  |
| 28 Ag4 | Ah8  |
| 29 Wf1 | Aeg8 |
| 30 Aa3 | Af8  |
| 31 Ab3 |      |

White tries to distract with threats against b7, but Black has a powerful riposte.

- |         |          |
|---------|----------|
| 31 ...  | Axc3     |
| 32 Axc3 | f5!      |
| 33 exf5 | Wxf5 (D) |

Black has total domination. The bishop on f2 is locked out of

the game, White's rooks are permanently disconnected, and e5 is a monster square for the knight.

### 34 b4

Faced with inevitable defeat, White switches to 'random' mode, hoping to confuse his opponent, but Black manages to avoid White's desperate tricks.

34...cxb4 35 Ac4 b3 36 Wc1 b2 37 Ac8+ Af7 38 Ac7+ Af8 39 Ac8+ Ae7 40 We1+ Ad7 41 Axc8 Axc8 42 Ag1 Ae5! White resigned due to 43 Axc8 b1W.

A razor-sharp game in which both sides took risks. This game shows that Black's play is not confined to the queenside; sometimes an all-out kingside attack is possible. True, White has an extra pawn on this flank, but Black has the semi-open e-file and active piece play.

This concludes our study of the ...Ag4 system against the Classical. Even at the very highest levels Black is doing fine in this system and I hope that these two

games demonstrate some of the plans and ideas at Black's disposal.

## System with ...♘a6

The main drawback of the ...♘a6-c7 plan is that the knight fails to

cover the e5 square. In the Classical, though, this is less of a worry since White's pieces are not ideally placed for an aggressive thrust with e4-e5. Black has time, therefore, to bring the knight to c7, where it is well placed to support the ...b7-b5 thrust.

### Game 14 Polugayevsky – Hulak Moscow GMA 1990

1 d4	♘f6
2 c4	e6
3 ♘f3	c5
4 d5	exd5
5 cxd5	d6
6 ♘c3	g6
7 ♘d2	

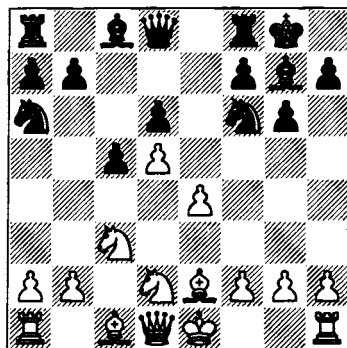
This move order from White bypasses the system with ...♗g4 but allows Black interesting prospects based on ...♘a6. Note, however, that after the sequence 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0, Black is ill-advised to play 9...♘a6 in view of 10 ♗f4.

7 ...	♗g7
8 e4	0-0
9 ♗e2	♘a6 (D)

This is the basic starting position. Instead of 9...♘a6, Black used to play 9...♞e8 10 ♘d2 ♘a6, but I feel that this restricts his options as 9...♞e8 prevents Black from using the e8 square for the f6 knight.

10 0-0

White resists the temptation to



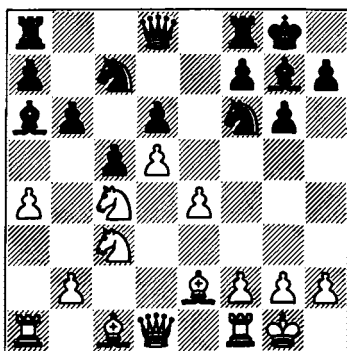
double Black's pawns with 10 ♗xa6, since this would give Black the open b-file and the bishop pair.

10 ...	♘c7
11 a4	b6

There are usually two reasons why Black plays ...b7-b6: to prevent White from crippling the pawn structure after ...a7-a6 by playing a4-a5; or, more importantly in this position, to give the bishop scope to enter the game via the a6-f1 diagonal. Obviously the drawback to the move ...b7-b6

is the loss of time: Black is aiming for ...b7-b5 and this advance would ideally be played in one move. In these Classical positions, however, White is not immediately blasting open the centre, so Black often has time for preparatory moves like ...b7-b6; and the move ...♖a6 will be very useful now that the knight is coming to c4.

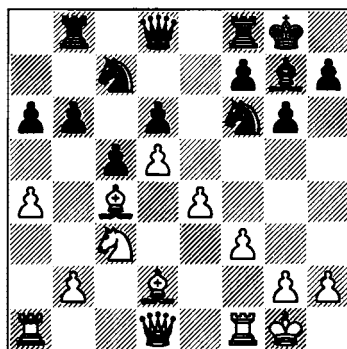
12 ♖c4 ♖a6



This is the standard position from which the main lines branch out. White can continue here with 13 ♖f4, when the usual plan for Black is simply 13...♖xc4 14 ♖xc4 a6 and the standard struggle for ...b6-b5 will ensue. Otherwise, Black could try the surprise move 13...♖h5, for example 14 ♖xh5 ♖xc4. Other 13th moves are possible for White, such as 13 ♖d2 and 13 ♖ab1, though Black's strategy in these cases is clear: a timely exchange with ...♖xc4, then ...a7-a6, ...♖ab8 and ...b6-b5.

13 f3 ♖b8  
14 ♖d2 ♖xc4

15 ♖xc4 ♖a6



Black has conceded the bishop pair but hopes to find counterplay with the usual queenside expansion. Obviously White must prevent ...b6-b5.

16 ♖e2 ♖c8

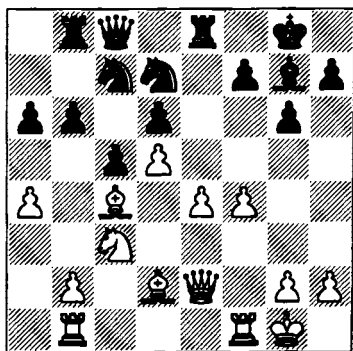
17 ♖ab1

White starts to reveal his strategy. The long-term prospects of preventing Black's ...b6-b5 are slim, so White must be able to counter. Here he intends his own queenside challenge with b2-b4. If played at the correct moment, this will pose serious questions for Black. Remember: if the queenside becomes blocked, White will have a free hand to roll the central pawn majority forward.

17 ... ♖d7

18 f4 ♖e8 (D)

This is a critical position for both sides. White committed the f-pawn forward to prevent the knight from entering e5, so once again the e-pawn is a target. Black would have liked to prepare

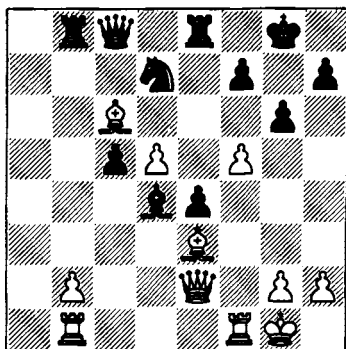


the b-pawn advance with ...♖b7, but this would have run into b2-b4 when the queen is a potential target for the b1 rook. White decides to break the deadlock.

19 e5            dxe5  
20 f5            b5

This is a necessary diversion since White was threatening d5-d6, hitting the knight and opening up a deadly attack on f7.

21 axb5        axb5  
22 ♖xb5        ♖xb5  
23 ♙xb5        e4  
24 ♙e3        ♙d4  
25 ♙c6



Hulak commits an error here, so Black should look for an alternative. Polugayevsky has also faced 25...♖b4 in this position (against Psakhis at Sochi in 1988). That game continued 26 ♖h1 ♙e5 27 fxg6 hxg6 28 ♙f4 ♙f5 and Black eventually came out on top. Since our game was played more than a year later, presumably 'Poly' had some improvement up his sleeve. I cannot see anything devastating, though, and the position seems to offer Black good practical chances.

25 ...            ♙e7?  
26 ♙xd4!        cxd4  
27 f6            ♙e5  
28 ♖d2

This is the point. White threatens both ♖xd4 and ♙xd7 with ♖h6 to follow.

28...♙c5 29 ♖xd4 ♙d3 30 b4 ♖g4 31 d6 ♙d8 32 d7 h5 33 ♖b6 ♙xd7 34 ♖b8+ Black resigned

After 34...♖h7 35 ♖f8 leads to mate.

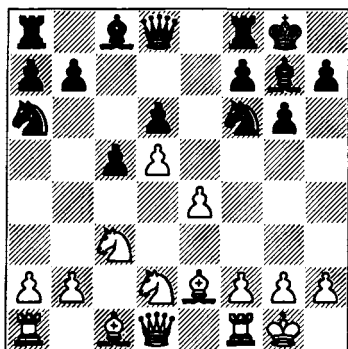
This game is a good illustration of the slow strategic preparations that both sides need to adopt in the ...♙a6 Classical. At some point the position will explode with one side playing either e4-e5 or ...b7-b5. How carefully and efficiently each side has conducted these preparations will usually determine who comes out on top.

The next game features an interesting idea which allows Black to deviate from the main line at an early stage.



## Game 15 Palatnik – Huzman Baku 1988

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 c5 4 d5  
d6 5 ♘c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 ♖d2  
♙g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♙e2 ♖a6 10 0-0)



10 ... ♖e8

At first sight it looks bizarre to retreat at such an early stage in the game, but the knight is making room for an interesting pawn advance.

11 ♖c4

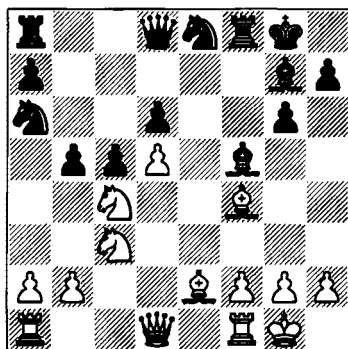
The aggressive alternative, 11 f4, could be met with 11...f5, when the position becomes very murky.

11 ... f5

12 exf5 ♙xf5

13 ♙f4 b5! (D)

This is the clever idea behind this system: if White captures the pawn with 14 ♖xb5 then 14...♙d7 hits both the bishop and the knight, and 15 ♙xd6 ♙xb5 16 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 is fine for Black since



the minor pieces will become very active.

14 ♖e3

♙d7

15 ♙g3

Black does have some weaknesses on the kingside (the e6 square could become a problem later on), but Black has already got the ...b7-b5 advance in and his pieces enjoy some open lines and diagonals.

15 ...

♖ac7

16 ♗c2

b4

17 ♖e4

♙f5!

Now 18 ♖xf5 will fail in view of 18...gxf5 and 19...f4 winning the bishop.

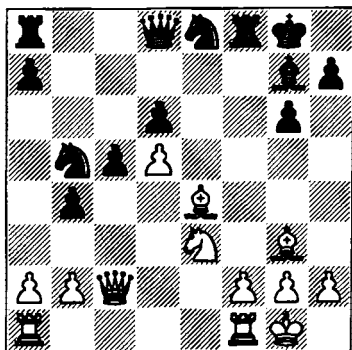
18 ♙d3

♙xe4

19 ♙xe4

♖b5 (D)

Once again Black is conducting the classic strategy: concede the bishop pair in return for queen-side expansion and active cavalry

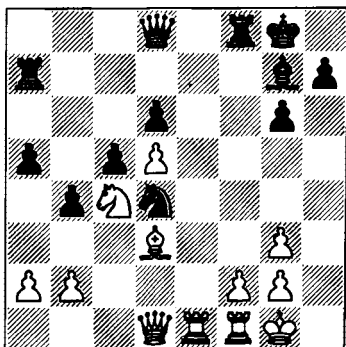


play. The d4 square is an outpost that White can never challenge. Whatever the objective assessment of this position, I'd prefer to be Black.

20  $\text{Qc4}$   $\text{Qf6}$

Delaying the deployment of the b5 knight (which covers d6) allows the other knight to enter the action.

21  $\text{Qd3}$   $\text{Qh5}$   
 22  $\text{Eae1}$   $\text{Qxg3}$   
 23  $\text{hxxg3}$   $\text{Qd4}$   
 24  $\text{Wd2}$   $\text{a5}$   
 25  $\text{Wd1}$   $\text{Ea7}$



Black's control of the d4 square

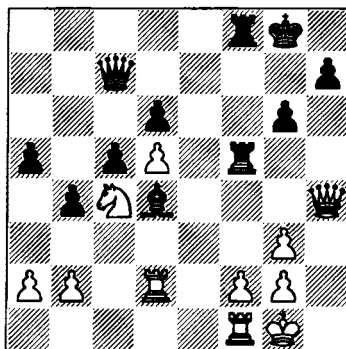
makes it difficult for White to find a meaningful plan. If White could deploy a knight to e6 then he would have good chances – but this destination is far off.

26  $\text{Wg4}$   $\text{Eaf7}$   
 27  $\text{Wh4}$   $\text{Wc7}$   
 28  $\text{Ed1}$   $\text{Qf5}$   
 29  $\text{Qxf5}$   $\text{Exf5}$

White has exchanged off the fearsome knight, but Black retains the powerful dark-squared bishop.

30  $\text{Ed2}$   $\text{Qd4}$

At this stage in a Benoni game the bishop is often ideally placed on d4, where it hits both the b2 and f2 pawns.



31  $\text{b3}$   $\text{E8f6}$  32  $\text{We4}$   $\text{Wf7}$  33  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Ee5}$  34  $\text{Wd3}$   $\text{Exe3}$  White resigned

After 35  $\text{fxe3}$   $\text{Exf1+}$  36  $\text{Wxf1}$   $\text{Qxe3+}$  Black has a decisive material advantage.

This is yet another game in which Black uses the lethal cocktail of queenside expansion combined with a kingside attack. The

system of 10...♖e8 and 11...f5 is not without risk, but it seems to offer prospects of an interesting game for Black. Although Benoni players may prefer to rely on the main line in the previous game, this system can be a useful surprise weapon in one's armoury.

### Systems with...♖bd7

The third way of meeting the Classical, by deploying the knight to d7, is rarely seen in international play these days. Why the decline in popularity? Basically Black wants to occupy e5 as an outpost for the knight, and White in turn wants to kick away the knight with f2-f4. In order to maintain the knight on e5, Black is usually obliged to play ...g6-g5, which compromises his kingside pawn structure and seriously weakens the square f5. Although

in the early eighties it seemed that Black's active piece play compensated for these weaknesses, the last few years has seen Black suffering at the international level.

Is the system with ...♖bd7 so bad? If you are up against a well-prepared grandmaster then 'yes', you are likely to be punished. Some White players have perfected the art of containing Black's advance and then slowly highlighting the weaknesses of the g5 pawn. At lower levels I would argue that Black gets good practical chances. White's plan requires considerable finesse. If White gets it wrong then the policy of quiet containment can easily backfire. My advice would be to reserve this system for relatively weak opposition or for games where you need to go for the win.

---

## Game 16

### Fedorowicz – Norwood

### London 1988

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♖f3 g6 7 ♖d2)

Remember the point of this move order: an early ♖f3-d2 prevents Black from playing the variations with ...♗g4, so that he has to choose one of the ...♖a6 or ...♖bd7 variations. The penalty is a loss of flexibility.

7 ... ♖bd7

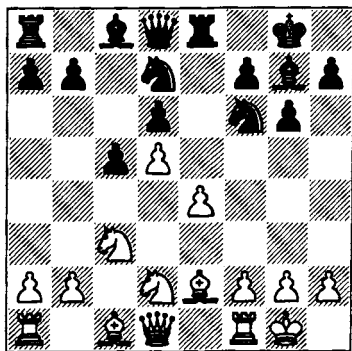
This move enables Black to meet 8 ♖c4 with 8...♖b6.

8 e4 ♗g7

9 ♗e2 0-0

10 0-0 ♗e8 (D)

This is the basic starting position. Black has done the obvious, attacking e4, and White has defended. Let us now think about how both sides can proceed. Black



will, as usual, want to play for the ...b7-b5 advance but as things stand this looks an unlikely prospect. White can hold b5 with the a-pawn, the e2 bishop and c3 knight, so Black needs the bishop on d7 to support the ...b7-b5 push. The knight must therefore advance from d7 to e5; but once on e5 it cannot be allowed to be pushed back. Hence the need for ...g6-g5.

In the initial stages White adopts a policy of restraint. First the b5 square must be covered, then White waits for the committal move ...g6-g5. After this advance White must set about demonstrating that Black has weakened his kingside. The g5 pawn is an obvious target, but the f5 square is even more vulnerable.

#### 11 a4

White has an important alternative here, 11 h3. This useful waiting move puts the question to Black. If simply 11...♗e5 then 12 f4 forces the knight to retreat.

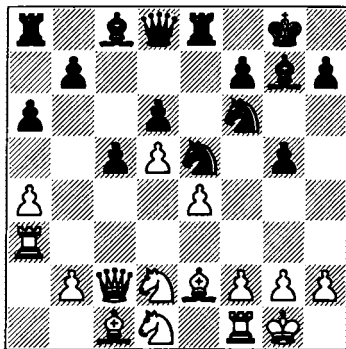
Black must prepare ...♗e5 by playing 11...g5 first. We now get involved in tactical complications: after 12 ♖c4!? ♗xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♜xe4 14 ♗xd6 ♞d4 15 ♜c2 there are some holes in Black's position. My hunch is that the best way to play is to give up material as follows: 15...♗b6 16 ♗xc8 ♜xc8 17 ♞e3 ♗xd5 18 ♞xd4 ♞xd4, when White is the exchange for a pawn up but Black's bishop on d4 is an excellent piece. Both f2 and b2 are targets for Black and the d5 knight can hop into useful squares such as f4 and b4. In practical play I'd be quite happy to play Black.

11 ... ♗e5

12 ♜a3

This move is an important part of White's strategy. The rook is required along the a-file, and deployment to a3 also allows it to assert a lateral influence along the third rank. If Black's kingside opens up, then the rook could swing into action on a square such as g3. The main alternative to 12 ♜a3 is 12 ♜e1; logical deployment of the rook to the e-file also frees the f1 square for the knight on d2. Remember, if Black plays ...g6-g5 then the f5 square is weak, and White can manoeuvre ♗d2-f1-g3-f5. Note that if White kicks the knight immediately with 12 f4 then 12...♗eg4 and the knight is ready to hop into e3 (the d2 knight cannot move as the e-pawn will fall).

12 ... g5  
13 ♖c2 a6  
14 ♘d1



This is an interesting alternative to the plan of ♖e1, ♘d2-f1-g3. The queen's knight can head for f5 via e3.

14 ... b6!?

The normal move, 14...♖b8, is well met by 15 a5, when after the further moves 15...b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 17 ♘e3 White's control of c4 and the weakness of the a6 pawn will make Black's life difficult. This is the beginning of an interesting plan by Black.

15 g3?

This is a poor move in view of Black's reply; White should have continued with simply 15 ♖b1 and the plan of b2-b4 as in the game, but in more beneficial circumstances. 15 ♘e3 is also sensible.

15 ... g4!

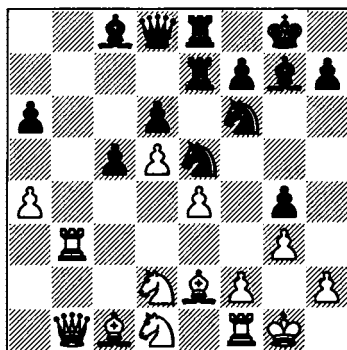
This stops White's ideas of expanding with f4. The g4 pawn can easily be defended and the f3

square could become vulnerable for White.

16 ♖b1 ♖a7  
17 b4 ♖ae7

This is the point: Black doubles rooks on the e-file in order to bring more pressure against the e4 pawn. Given that White is preparing to open up the queenside, a counter strike in the centre makes a good deal of sense.

18 bxc5 bxc5  
19 ♖b3



19 ... ♘ed7?

This is a horrible move, completely overlooking White's reply. Black should not be worse before this move; e.g. 19...♘g6 20 ♔d3 and now Black could play 20...♘e5, when White has nothing better than 21 ♔e2 with a repetition.

20 ♘e3

Suddenly the f5 square looks very vulnerable; there is nothing better than an ignominious return to e5.

20 ... ♘e5

21 ♖b8 ♔c7

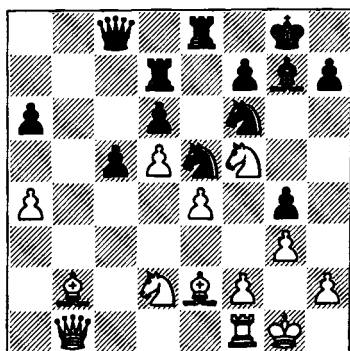
22 ♖xc8!

A good decision. The occupation of the f5 square more than compensates for the loss of the exchange.

22 ... ♖xc8

23 ♘f5 ♖d7

24 ♙b2



Black is tied in knots. The rooks are useless and the g7 bishop is terrorised by the f5 knight and the b2 bishop.

24 ... ♙f8

25 ♖c1 h6

26 ♘c4 ♘h7

27 ♙xe5 dxe5

28 ♘b6 ♖b7

29 ♘xd7 ♖xd7

30 ♖c2 ♖a7

31 ♖b1 c4 (D)

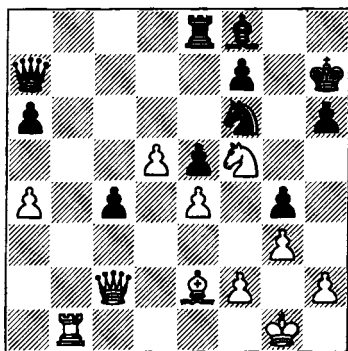
Desperate, but the only chance for Black's dark-squared bishop to see the light of day.

32 ♖xc4 ♙c5

33 ♘g2 a5

34 d6 ♖d8

35 ♘e7!



The final trick. White threatens both 36 ♖xf7+ and 36 ♘c6, so **Black resigned.**

If you are intent on trying ...♘bd7 remember the following:

a) It will usually be necessary to play ...g6-g5, after which you must guard the f5 square with your life. This means that you cannot exchange off the light-squared bishop, unless it is for a knight that has landed on f5.

b) After ...g6-g5, White may try to open up the kingside. Do not be afraid of this, since the white king will also become vulnerable. Advancing ...g5-g4 can sometimes prevent White's kingside pawn expansion (as in the above game).

c) Try to hold the knight on e5: a knight on this outpost puts you in a good position to counter White's threats on both flanks.

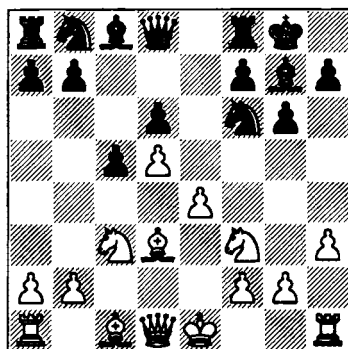
Be patient! These are slow strategical positions and if you rush matters it can end in disaster. Wait for White's push, and *then* spring the counter-blow.

# 4 Modern Classical Variation

The Modern Classical system is characterised by the position after:

- |           |      |
|-----------|------|
| 1 d4      | ♘f6  |
| 2 c4      | c5   |
| 3 d5      | e6   |
| 4 ♘c3     | exd5 |
| 5 cxd5    | d6   |
| 6 ♘f3     | g6   |
| 7 e4      | ♙g7  |
| 8 h3      | 0-0  |
| 9 ♙d3 (D) |      |

A decade ago, this system was hardly ever seen in tournament play, but now it is the one that Benoni players are most likely to face, the product of a gradual re-think by White players on how to beat the Benoni. The new method



is restraint: overprotect e4 with the knight on c3, bishop on d3 and rook on e1; keep Black's queen's bishop out of the game with h2-h3; and, of course, prevent ...b7-b5. White's knight normally stays on f3 instead of heading for c4.

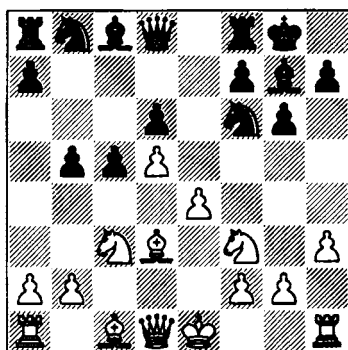
## Game 17

Alburt – de Firmian


USA Ch., Jacksonville 1990

- (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3  
exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 h3  
♙g7 8 e4 0-0 9 ♙d3)  
9 ... b5 (D)

The most common thrust in the Modern Benoni. In this case the ...b7-b5 break lures away either the knight or the bishop from the defence of e4, and then Black sacrifices a piece on e4, but only temporarily, since ...♗a5+ or ...♞e8 will recoup the material. Recent



analysis, though, suggests that 9...b5 allows White to gain a strong advantage and this is borne out in this game. The main alternatives are 9...♞e8 10 0-0 c4 (Games 18 and 19), 9...a6 10 a4 ♞e8 11 0-0 ♜bd7 (Game 20) and 9...a6 10 a4 ♜h5 (Game 21).

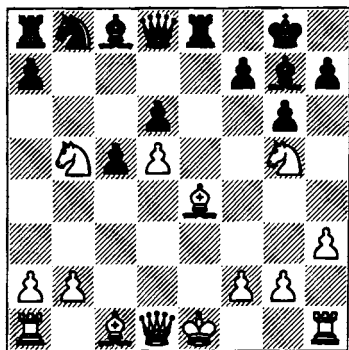
**10** xb5

10 ♖xb5 might also be promising for White; e.g. 10... ♖xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♜a5+ 12 ♔f2 ♜xb5 13 ♖xd6 ♜a6 14 ♔c2c4 ♔d7 15 0-0 when Black may have compensation for the pawn, though my hunch is that it is not enough.

10 ... xe4

11 xe4 e8

**12 ♖g5!!**



**This is the move that probably puts the whole idea of 9...b5 out of business. The problem is that when Black finally regains the piece, White will have a powerful initiative.**

12 ... f5

This gives White the game he wants, but is there a better move?

**Let us take a look at the alternatives:**

a) 12...h6 is the logical move to dislodge the defender of e4, but after 13 ♖e6! fxe6 14 0-0 e5 15 ♙xg6 White is a pawn ahead and, more importantly, he can launch an attack on the b1-h7 diagonal. After the alternative, 13...♗a5+ 14 ♖c3 ♙xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♜xc3+ 16 ♙d2 ♜e5 17 0-0 ♙xe6 18 dxe6 ♜xe4 19 exf7+ ♜xf7 20 ♖e1 ♜c6 21 ♙g4, White has a dangerous attack according to American grandmaster Max Dlugy.

If 12...h6 doesn't work, what about 12...♗xb2 instead?

b) 12...♟b2 13 ♟b2 ♟g5 14 ♟f3 ♟d5 15 ♞c3 ♟b7 16 0-0-0 wins easily for White; and 14...f5 15 ♞d6 ♞e7 16 ♟c3 hardly looks convincing for Black either.



So with all the tactics working in White's favour, Black has to play 12...f5.

**13 0-0 fxe4**

**14 He1      🖐b6**

**15** ♖c3      ♖d7

**There is no way to shore up the e-pawn; when it drops off the board Black has to rely on tricks.**

16 cxe4 b7

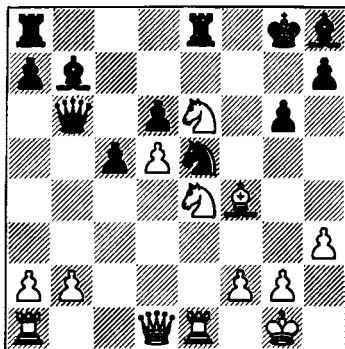
**17 f4!**

A good decision; the d6 pawn is more useful than the b2 pawn. Besides, capturing the b2 pawn would be disastrous after the reply ♖b1, since Black has too many pieces lined up along the b-file.

17 ... e5

**18** e6 h8





19 d4xc5

With such a dominating position, it is hardly surprising that the tactics favour White.

19 ... dxc5

20 ♖xe5 ♖xe5

21 ♖xe5 ♔d6

If Black could win the d5 pawn without having to exchange a bishop for a knight, there would be good chances of a counterattack. White's next move, though, deploys the rook to a square where it can hold the d5 pawn and menace the black king. Black has no option but to trade off.

22 ♖g5 ♖xd5

23 ♗xd5 ♗xd5

24 ♖xd5 ♖xe6

25 ♖xc5 ♖e2

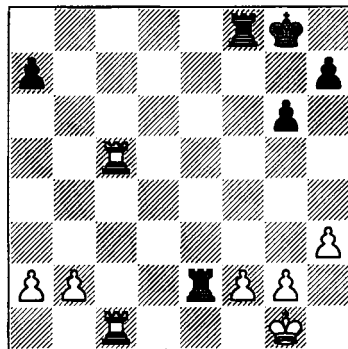
26 ♖ac1 ♖f8 (D)

27 ♖lc2?

This gives Black excellent drawing chances. The correct way to play was 27 ♖c8 ♖xf2 29 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 29 ♖c2 with a winning endgame for White.

27 ... ♖xf2

28 ♖c8+ ♔g7



29 ♖c8+ ♔h6

30 ♖xe2 ♖xe2

31 ♖b7 a6

32 a4 ♔g5

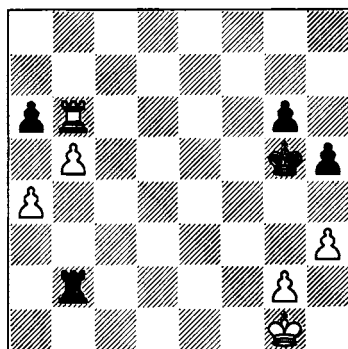
33 b4 h5?

A grave mistake. As Dlugy points out, 33...♖a2 34 a5 h5 35 ♖b6 ♖b2 is a drawn endgame.

34 ♖b6 ♖b2

35 b5

A nice trick; Black cannot capture with 35...axb5 because 36 ♖xb5+ forces an exchange into a winning ending.



35...a5 36 ♖a6 ♔f4 37 ♖xg6 ♖b4 38 ♖f6+ ♔g3 39 ♖f1 ♖xa4 40

**Σb1 Σb4 41 Σxb4 axb4 42 b6**  
and the pawn rolls home, so  
**Black resigned.**

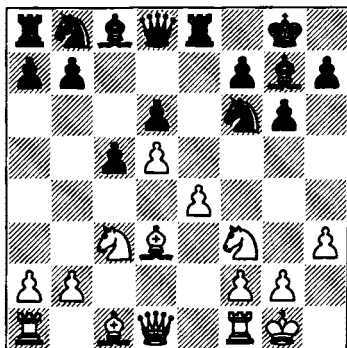
As you will appreciate, lines  
with 9...b5 are quite complex and

there is no shortage of tactical  
variations. The verdict at pre-  
sent, however, is that the cards  
are stacked in White's favour. Un-  
less you have an improvement  
prepared, avoid 9...b5.

## Game 18 Bischoff – C.Hansen Hamburg 1991

(1 ♖f3 c5 2 c4 g6 3 d4 ♗g7 4 d5  
d6 5 e4 ♖f6 6 ♖c3 0-0 7 h3 e6 8  
♗d3 exd5 9 cxd5)

9 ... ♗e8  
10 0-0



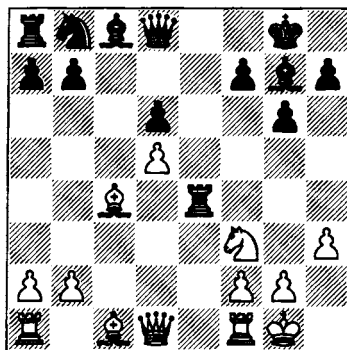
10 ... c4

This move aims to take advantage of White's delay in castling. If White's rook were already on e1, this idea would not work as the e4 pawn would be too well defended, but here Black can try to deflect the bishop.

11 ♗xc4

The alternative is 11 ♗c2, which we consider in the next game.

11 ... ♖xe4  
12 ♖xe4 ♗xe4



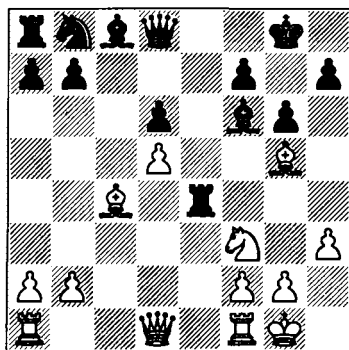
13 ♗g5

This is the logical continuation for White: develop and attack. If Black has time to mobilise his queenside then he should be doing quite well. However, White has a temporary initiative which must be neutralised first.

13 ... ♗f6

This is the best choice, though it is tempting to try to retain the dark-squared bishop. Another possibility is 13... ♗b6, when the game becomes sharp after 14 ♖d2

(hitting the rook on e4; White wants to make the most of the lead in development) 14...♖e8 (after 14...♗e5 15 ♖e3 ♗xb2 16 ♖c1! White has a great attack for the sacrificed pawn) 15 ♖e1 ♗xe1+ 16 ♗xe1 and now if 16...♗xb2 Black runs into trouble after 17 ♗e8+ ♖f8 18 ♖b1 ♗e5 19 ♗xc8 ♗xg5 20 ♗xb7 and White is winning material. Alternatively, the line 16...♖d7 17 ♖e4 ♗xb2 18 ♖d1 gives White good compensation for the pawn since d6 is very weak. If the black queen leaves the a1-h8 diagonal then 19 ♖f6+ will be very powerful; if 18...♗e5 19 f4 keeps the attack going. For these reasons I prefer 13...♖f6.



14 ♖d3 ♖e8  
15 ♗d2

If 15 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 and Black is fine since the queen is well placed on f6 and the knight can enter the game on e5 or c5 via d7.

15 ... ♖xg5

The alternative is 15...♖d7, after which White should try to

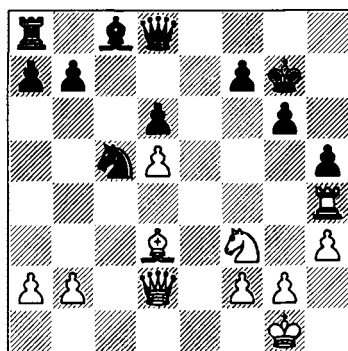
keep up the pressure with 16 ♖fe1.

16 ♖xg5 h6!?  
17 ♖f3

17 ♖e4 would be met by 17...♖f5 and Black is fine. Black is happy to trade bishop for knight since in the long term White's light-squared bishop is inferior to the knight, as the bishop's mobility is restricted by the d5 pawn which it will be forced simply to defend in the endgame.

Nobody seems to have considered 17 ♖xf7!? in this position, but it could be promising: 17...♖xf7 18 ♗xh6 and the g6 pawn is far from easy to defend; e.g. 18...♗f6 19 ♗h7+ ♗g7 20 ♖xg6+ winning. In my opinion, 17 ♖xf7 looks rather dangerous for Black.

17 ... ♖g7  
18 ♖fe1 ♖xe1+  
19 ♖xe1 ♖d7  
20 ♖e4 ♖c5  
21 ♖h4 h5



It would appear that White has a dangerous attack but Black's

position is quite resilient. The f6 square is a very useful defensive outpost for Black's queen and the knight is poised to exchange off the bishop on d3 if necessary.

22 ♖b1?!

As it transpires, the bishop would be better on c2.

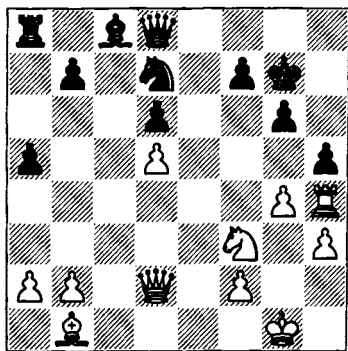
22 ... a5

A good waiting move which prevents b2-b4 and encourages White to commit himself.

23 g4?!

This is the kind of move that begs to be played in these positions, but it leaves White's position extremely loose.

23 ... ♘d7!



Now the knight must come to the defence of the kingside.

24 gxf5 ♖e5

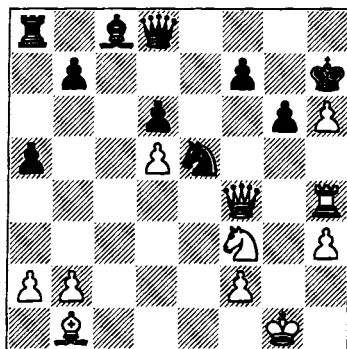
This is the point. White cannot capture in view of 25 ♘xe5 ♗xh4.

25 h6+ ♔h7

26 ♗f4?!

Of course not 26 ♘g5+ when 26... ♗xg5+ 27 ♗xg5 ♘f3+ wins a piece for nothing. Instead, 26 ♗f4

f5 is comfortable for Black as the h6 pawn serves as a protector to the black king.



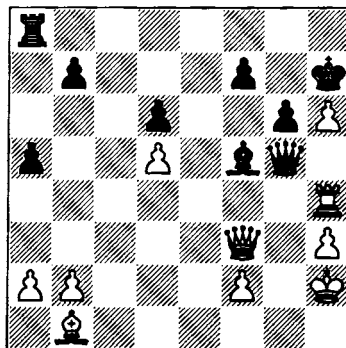
26 ... ♘xf3+

27 ♗xf3 ♗g5+

No, not 27... ♗xh4 because 28 ♗xf7+ is mate next move!

28 ♔h2 ♘f5!

Now most of White's pieces are hanging.



29 ♗c4 ♘xb1

30 ♗xf7+ ♔xh6

31 ♗g4 ♗e5+

32 ♔g2 g5

33 h4 ♘g6

34  $\text{hxg5+}$   $\text{Wxg5!}$

The *coup de grâce* of a brilliant defensive game by Black.

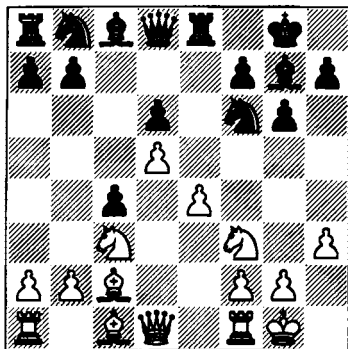
35  $\text{We6}$   $\text{Ze8!}$

Accurate to the end. If 36  $\text{Zxg5}$   $\text{Zxe6}$  and White remains a piece down in the endgame. So White resigned.

## Game 19 Dreev – Wedberg New York Open 1991

(1  $\text{d4}$   $\text{d6}$  2  $\text{c4}$   $\text{e6}$  3  $\text{d3}$   $\text{c5}$  4  $\text{d5}$   $\text{exd5}$  5  $\text{cxd5}$   $\text{d6}$  6  $\text{dxc3}$   $\text{g6}$  7  $\text{e4}$   $\text{g7}$  8  $\text{h3}$  0-0 9  $\text{d3}$   $\text{Ze8}$  10 0-0  $\text{c4}$ )

11  $\text{dxc4}$



The alternative to 11  $\text{dxc4}$ . White intends to maintain his pawn majority in the centre, so he sticks to the defence of e4. The plan is clear: secure e4 and then prove that Black has weakened his position with the ...c5-c4 advance. If White has time to consolidate this plan, then the Black player will start to suffer. So we continue the policy of taking the battle to him...

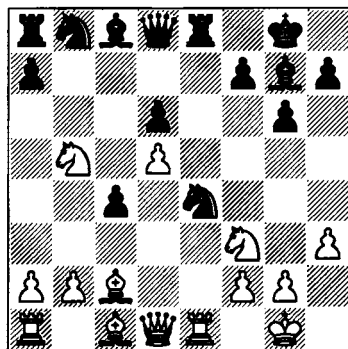
11 ...  $\text{b5}$

12  $\text{dxb5}$

With Black's pawns storming the queenside, there was really no other option. Besides, the threat was ...b5-b4 dislodging the knight from the defence of e4.

12 ...  $\text{dxe4}$

13  $\text{Ze1}$



13 ...  $\text{a6}$

This is perfectly playable, but it is not really the style to which we have become accustomed. Let's go for it with 13... $\text{dxf2!}$ . Now after 14  $\text{dxf2}$ , we can play 14... $\text{Zxe1}$ . Any way you look at it, we regain a piece. If either 15  $\text{We1}$  or 15  $\text{dxe1}$ , 15... $\text{Wb6+}$  picks up the knight. Otherwise 15  $\text{dxe1}$

♖e8+ and the same principle applies but with a different fork.

So White must play 14 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 15 ♘c7 ♗e7 (15... ♘d1 16 ♘xe8 and White still has the move ♘c7 winning the rook on a8) 16 ♗e1 ♗xc7 17 ♗e8+ ♙f8 18 ♙h6 ♘xh3+! 19 gxf3 ♗c5+. Believe it or not, this position has actually been reached in several games. White's best move is 20 ♖h1 and now 20... ♘d7 21 ♘g5 ♗xd5+ (21... ♗f2 22 ♙e4 ♗f6 may be better – Nunn) 22 ♙e4 ♙b7! 23 ♗xd7 ♗xe4+ 24 ♘xe4 ♙xe4+ 25 ♖h2 ♙xh6 26 ♗xd6 is given as unclear by Magerramov. Although it would not be to everybody's taste, it does seem that Black's two bishops and two pawns give good compensation for the queen. Either way, it is good for the crowds.

14 a4 ♙xb5

15 axb5 ♘c5

16 ♘d2

16 ♖xe8+ is better for White after 16... ♗xe8 17 ♘d4 ♙xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♗e1+ 19 ♖h2 ♘bd7 20 f4!, according to Dreev.

16 ... ♖xe1+

17 ♗xe1 (D)

17 ... c3

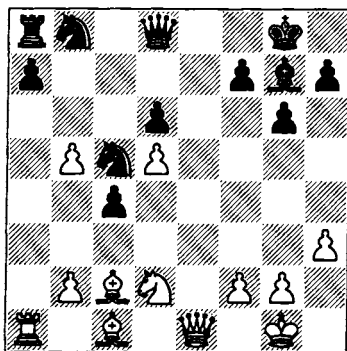
18 bxc3 ♙xc3

19 ♖a3 ♙b4

20 ♖e3

I never feel comfortable when my fianchetto bishop gets diverted from the long diagonal, especially when my opponent has a bishop that can occupy it.

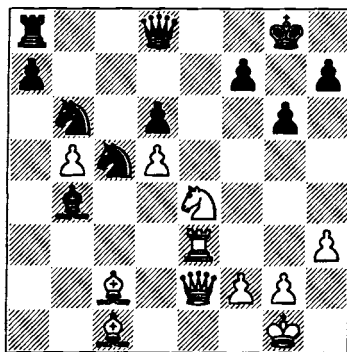
20 ... ♘bd7



21 ♗e2 ♘b6

It looks as if Black is ready to gobble the d-pawn, but White has a resource.

22 ♘e4



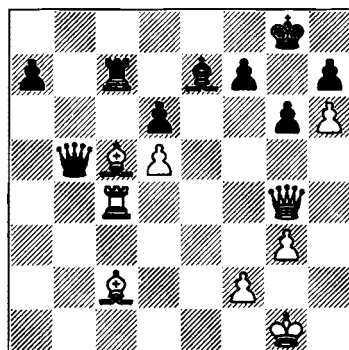
Now if 22... ♘xd5 White starts to get tricky with 23 ♙b2! – as I said earlier, beware of the bishop occupying this long diagonal. Grabbing the rook with 23... ♘xe3 is suicide in view of 24 ♘f6+ ♖f8 23 ♗xe3 and White has a devastating attack. Black's best move after 23 ♙b2! is 23... ♖c8! and now 24 ♙b3 ♘xe4 25 ♙xd5 ♘c3 with a roughly equal game.

22 ... ♖xe4  
 23 ♖xe4 ♙c3  
 24 h4 ♖d7  
 25 h5 ♖c5  
 26 ♖c4 ♙f6  
 27 ♙e3 ♖c8  
 28 ♗g4 ♖c7  
 29 g3 ♗b8  
 30 h6 ♗xb5  
 31 ♙xc5 ♙e7 (D)

White's 30 h6 created a permanent mating danger on the back rank, for example 31...♖xc5 32 ♗c8+ with mate to follow. Since 31...dxc5 32 d6 is also tremendous Black tries to be clever, but falls on his face.

32 ♙xg6! f×g6

The point is that after 32...hxg6 33 h7+ ♔xh7 34 ♗h3+ ♔g8 35 ♙d4! Black cannot defend against



both threats of 36 ♗h8 mate and 36 ♖xc7.

33 ♗e6+ ♔f8  
 34 ♖b4 ♖xc5  
 35 ♖xb5 ♖xb5  
 36 ♗c8+ ♔f7  
 37 ♗h8

The h-pawn will fall and with it the game, so **Black resigned**.

## Game 20

### Henley – Rohde

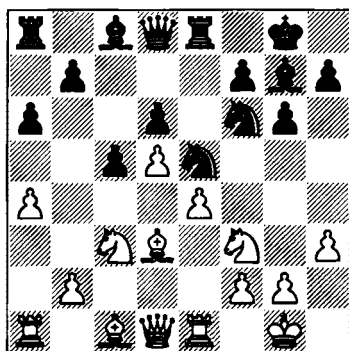
### New York 1990

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♖c3 ♙g7 5 e4 d6 6 ♙d3 0-0 7 h3 a6 8 a4 e6 9 ♖f3 exd5 10 cxd5 ♖e8 11 0-0)

11 ... ♖bd7  
 12 ♖e1 ♖e5!? (D)

Treating the knight as excess baggage. With this move Black attempts to liberate his queen-side pieces, but the drawback is that White develops his dark-squared bishop with tempo.

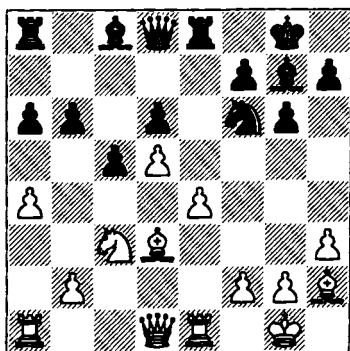
13 ♖xe5 ♖xe5  
 14 ♙f4!?



This move intends to support a future e4-e5. However, if White's

central advance does not come off (as in this game), White's bishop can be out of the game for a long time. As a result, Black has the a1-h8 diagonal free of charge.

14 ... ♖e8  
15 ♖h2 b6!



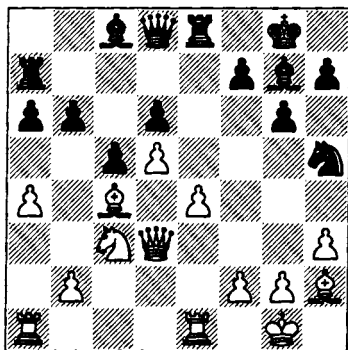
An all-purpose move. White was threatening to play the cramping a4-a5, which would stop Black's counterplay on the queenside. In addition, 15...b6! brings the rook on a8 into the game via a7.

16 ♖c4

Bolstering up the d-pawn for the pawn offensive.

16 ... ♖a7  
17 ♖d3 ♖h5! (D)

An excellent move which has a number of favourable points. In one stroke the bishop on g7 is freed; Black has ideas of ...f7-f5 undermining White's centre; the crucial e5 square is given more support; the f4 square can become an outpost for the knight after a move such as ...♗e5; and finally, 17...♖h5 provokes White to play



g2-g4. This move, which gains a tempo, is extremely tempting but then White must be able to consolidate his position quickly, or he will be made to pay for voluntarily weakening his king position.

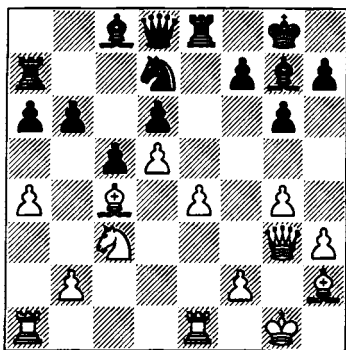
18 g4 ♖f6  
19 ♖g3?

The immediate 19 f4! was the only way to try and justify White's ambitious 18 g4. Black would be forced to reply 19...♖d7 with the positional threat of ...g6-g5. If White simply ignores this idea with a natural move such as 20 ♖e2 then 20...g5! 21 f5 ♗e5! would give Black a clear advantage. White's best chances lie with 20 g5 h6 21 h4, when there is a balanced struggle over the e5 square, though White has a space advantage, or with 20 ♖d2 g5!? 21 fxg5 ♖e5 22 ♗e2, when Black's compensation may not be enough.

19 ... ♖d7! (D)  
20 ♗f1?

After this move, Black has a clear plus. The slightly risky-looking 20 ♖xd6! was White's last





chance. After 20 ♖xd6! ♕e5 White should avoid 21 ♗xe5? ♜d7! 22 ♗f6 ♗xf6 23 ♜g3 when, with the queens still on the board, Black has clear compensation. Instead he can try 21 ♜xd8 ♕f3+ 22 ♖h1 (22 ♖g2? ♕xe1+ nets the exchange) 22... ♜xd8 23 ♞e3 ♕xh2 24 ♖xh2 when Black's dark-squared bishop compensates for the pawn, but White has some winning chances.

20 ... ♗e5!  
21 f4 ♗d4+  
22 ♖h1 g5!  
23 fxg5

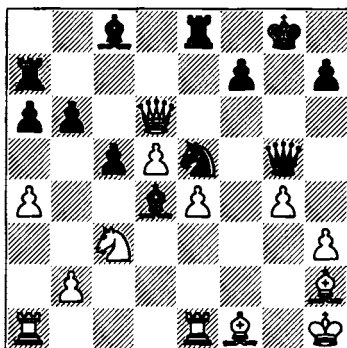
Keeping the position closed with 23 f5 is more stubborn but also more painful. Black would then play 23... ♗e5! (an important move, removing White's protection

of the e5 square) 24 ♜e3 ♗xh2 25 ♖xh2 ♜f6 with a clear advantage for Black.

23 ... ♜xg5  
24 ♜xd6

This move loses but White faced positional strangulation on the dark squares in any case.

24 ... ♕e5



25 ♕e2

25 ♗xe5 is also bad, as after the continuation 25... ♗xe5 26 ♜xb6 ♗xg4! 27 ♗g2 ♜f4 28 ♖g1 ♜h2+ 29 ♖f1 ♗xh3 30 ♗xh3 ♜xh3+ 31 ♖e2 ♗xc3 White will not be around much longer.

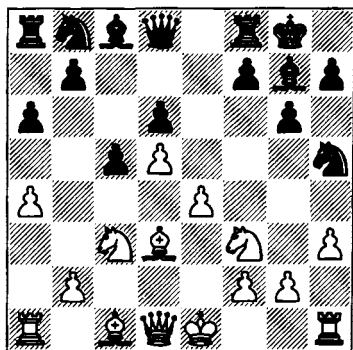
25... ♗xb2 26 ♞ab1 ♕d3 27 ♕g3 ♗e5 28 ♜xb6 ♕xe1 29 ♞xe1 ♞b7 30 ♜c6 ♞f8 31 ♕h5 ♗xg4 32 hxg4 White resigned

## Game 21

### Topalov – Dochev

#### Pazardzik 1991

(1 d4 ♕f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♕c3 a4 e6 9 ♗d3 exd5 10 cxd5)  
d6 5 e4 ♗g7 6 ♕f3 0-0 7 h3 a6 8 10 ... ♕h5!?



Black immediately prepares to play on the dark squares and sets up a possible ...f7-f5. Note that the immediate 11 g4? gains a tempo, but after 11...d6 White has gained nothing and has weakened his kingside unnecessarily. The drawbacks of this system, are that White can flick in g5 and it could be argued that Black's pieces are not on their 'natural' squares.

11 0-0 d6

12 g5! f6

What else? The queen could go to c7, but after c1 White will play b2-b4 and try to take advantage of the queen's awkward position. In addition, ...a5 or ...b6 will rule out any ...b7-b5 ideas and after ...e8, e1, the queen is in much the same dilemma as on c7. The immediate 12...f6? ruins Black's pawn structure, while 12...d6f6 loses a piece to 13 g4, so Black's only move is 12...f6.

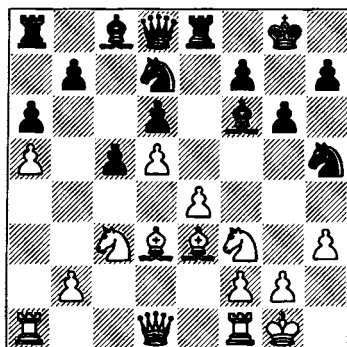
13 e3

13 xxf6 falls in with Black's plan as the knights will jump into

f4 and e5 with good play on the dark squares, whilst 13 h6 forces 13...e8, but Black would like to play this anyway.

13 ... e8

14 a5



A new move at the time. The immediate 14 g4 is playable in this position as the black knight will have to go to g7, where it is far from ideally placed, though White has still weakened his kingside. Another good scheme is 14 d2 b8 15 f1 e5 16 e2 b5 17 xe5 xe5 18 axb5 axb5 19 xb5 f6 20 g5 f4 21 xxf6 xd2 22 xd6! with a clear advantage to White, as in Sakaev-Dochev, Singapore 1990.

14 ... b8

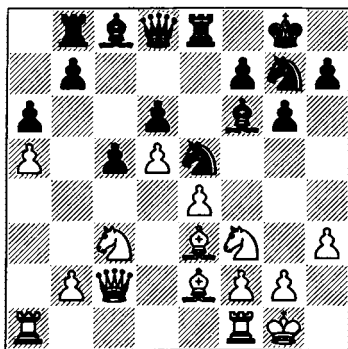
15 c2

White's plan is now very clear. He will play f1 followed by d2-c4 when all his pieces are ideally placed for any Black counterattack. In addition to this, White will slowly build up to f2-f4 followed by e4-e5 if Black does

nothing. After 15 ♖e1 Topalov gives the following line: 15...b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 17 ♖ab1 ♕e5 18 ♖e2 ♕xf3+ 19 ♖xf3 ♕g7 when White still has the advantage due to the bad knight on g7, but Black is nevertheless still in the game.

15 ... ♕e5  
16 ♖e2 ♕g7?

Better was 16...♕xf3+ 17 ♖xf3 b5 18 axb6 ♖xb6 when 19 ♖xh5? would be a mistake, as it allows Black good play down the g-file. Notice how Black would then be playing on both sides of the board and thus White would have difficulty in holding back play on both the g- and b-files.



17 ♕d2 g5

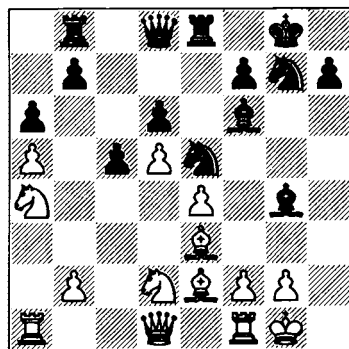
A common Benoni theme and the only move to stay in the game. The immediate 17...b5? would result in an advantage to White after 18 axb6 ♖xb6 19 f4 ♕d7 20 ♖a2! and White has multiple threats of ♕c4 and ♖fa1. Dochev's move stops White from playing f2-f4 as, unless White is able to

recapture with a pawn after ...gxf4, Black will dominate the e5 square. The drawback of 17...g5 is that it weakens the light squares around the black king, and in particular the f5 square.

18 ♖a4!

White temporarily forgets the kingside to hold up Black's play on the queenside. Although Black has the initiative on the kingside, he needs queenside play via a ...b7-b5 thrust to keep the game in the balance. If White manages to close up the queenside, Black's superficial set-up on the other wing will quickly collapse. In addition, 18...♖xa5 19 b4! cxb4 20 ♖b6 wins the queen.

18 ... g4  
19 hxg4 ♖xg4  
20 ♖d1!



There was still time to go wrong; for example 20 f3 ♖d7 would allow Black some play after ...♕h5. White's plan is obvious: he would like to play f2-f4 kicking away Black's only active

piece on e5. However, preparation of this plan is important and the g4 square should be protected from invasion.

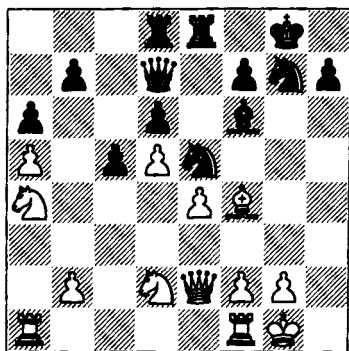
20 ... ♖xe2

21 ♖xe2 ♗d7

22 ♖f4!

Yet again White takes a time out to restrict Black's counterplay. After 22...♗b5 23 ♖xb5 axb5 24 ♖c3 b4 25 ♖b5! ♖ed8 26 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 27 ♖c4 ♖e8 White's knights dominate the board.

22 ... ♖bd8



23 ♖b6 ♖e7

If 23...♗b5 24 ♖dc4! and White won't be long in converting.

24 ♖ab1 ♖g6

25 ♖e3

Not 25 ♖g3 ♖f5! and Black would be back in the game. The props have all been set up: White

has won the queenside; Black's pieces are huddled awkwardly on the kingside and everything awaits the f2-f4 thrust. Black's next move is a clear mistake, giving White a tempo on a move which he will play anyway. Instead 25...h5 would have been a better defensive try, gaining the g4 square after f2-f4.

25 ... ♖e5

26 f4 ♖d4?

27 ♖xd4 cxd4

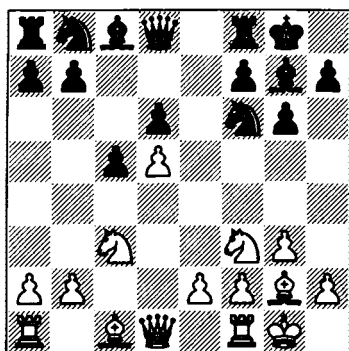
28 f5

**Black resigned**

Topalov showed that with patience and accurate play, it is easy to make Black look a fool. However, notice how slowly White developed the seemingly obvious plan of f2-f4. There were many junctures where White could have been tempted to play this advance, but on each occasion Black would then have had some counterchances. As it was, Black resigned two moves after f4 was finally played. The Black player should observe that the Benoni requires dynamic play on both sides of the board; very often White can hold up queenside or kingside play but rarely can he cope with both.

We reach the basic starting position of the Fianchetto system as follows:

1	d4	♟f6
2	c4	c5
3	d5	e6
4	♞c3	exd5
5	cxtd5	d6
6	♞f3	g6
7	g3	♞g7
8	♞g2	0-0
9	0-0	



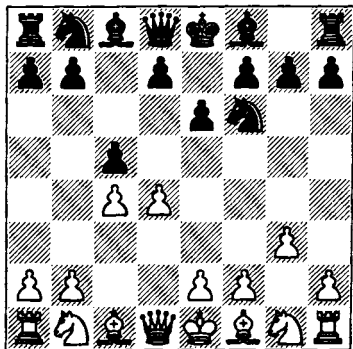
As the title suggests, this chapter covers the system in which White opts to fianchetto his light-squared bishop. This means that White can delay e2-e4, so Black is deprived of the target on e4. Only when White has established a bind on the position will the pawns be rolled forward with e2-e4, f2-f4 and e4-e5, and if the centre opens up, and White pushes d5-d6, then the fianchetto bishop

will become a monster along the h1-a8 diagonal. My instinct has always been that the fianchetto system is a misguided way of facing the Benoni: the light-squared bishop has an important role along the f1-a6 diagonal, most notably the restraining of the ...b7-b5 advance. True, White can position his knights to perform this function (the manoeuvre ♞f3-d2-c4 is a common theme in this system) but the time it takes for White to execute these plans gives Black good chances to generate counterplay. In practical play Black has scored well against this system.

Why, then, does the fianchetto system remain such a prominent system against the Benoni? Probably because many Black players who distrust the Benoni generally, are prepared to play it if White adopts this system. For example, many games arise via the following transposition:

1	d4	♟f6
2	c4	e6
3	g3	c5 (D)

Presumably, if White had continued 3 ♞c3 or 3 ♞f3, Black would not have played 3...c5. Many transpositions also occur via the King's Indian Defence, Fianchetto variation. Black has two main ways of dealing with the



system: the knight on b8 can be deployed either to d7 (Games 22-24) or a6 (Games 26 and 27). The former tends to lead to more exciting play, but both plans are perfectly respectable. Before we get on to the games, some remarks should be made regarding move order.

If Black does not wish to play the lines with ... $\Delta$ a6 then the normal move order these days is 9...a6 10 a4  $\Delta$ bd7. But ten years ago the preferred move was 9... $\Delta$ e8 (or 9...a6 10 a4  $\Delta$ e8). Usually, the game continued 10  $\Delta$ d2 a6 11 a4  $\Delta$ bd7 with a transposition into lines with 9...a6 10 a4  $\Delta$ bd7 11  $\Delta$ d2  $\Delta$ e8; but after 9... $\Delta$ e8 there is the possibility of a different variation if White continues with 10  $\Delta$ f4, and this is considered in Game 25.

### System with ... $\Delta$ bd7

The following game, the highlight of the 1982 Olympiad, is one of the most famous ever played in the Modern Benoni.

#### Game 22

#### Korchnoi – Kasparov Lucerne Olympiad 1982

1 d4  $\Delta$ f6  
2 c4 g6  
3 g3  $\Delta$ g7  
4  $\Delta$ g2 c5

6  $\Delta$ c3 0-0  
7  $\Delta$ f3 e6  
8 0-0 exd5  
9 cxd5

It is appropriate here to quote from Kasparov's notes: 'The system with the fianchetto of the white-squared bishop, which is highly unpleasant for Black in the classical King's Indian, is by no means as effective in Modern Benoni set-ups. It is this that explains Black's fourth move.'

5 d5 d6

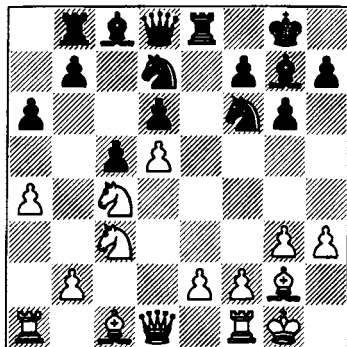
Back to the Benoni.

9 ... a6  
10 a4  $\Delta$ e8  
11  $\Delta$ d2  $\Delta$ bd7  
12 h3

Can White avoid playing this move? The immediate 12  $\Delta$ c4 is well met by 12... $\Delta$ e5; e.g. 13  $\Delta$ a3  $\Delta$ d7! and Black is threatening ...b7-b5 since the a8 rook exerts a

pin along the a-file, whilst after 14 f4 ♖e4 the e3 square is very weak. 12 h3 is useful since it covers the g4 square.

12 ... ♜b8  
13 ♖c4



This is an important theoretical position. Black must defend the d6 pawn, but not with a queen move such as 13...♙c7, as this would allow White to grab the initiative with 14 ♗f4. Black is therefore in a dilemma: should he play 13...♖b6 or 13...♗e5 here? 13...♖b6 is more positional, and a good deal safer; but those seeking a quite life should not be playing the Modern Benoni. Hence I do not even intend to look at 13...♖b6, and I make no apologies for this. I've never played it myself because the alternative is so much more fun.

13 ... ♗e5  
14 ♖a3

At first sight White's play seems bizarre. The well-placed knight on f3 has spent three moves to

deploy itself at the edge of the board. But don't forget the plan: quiet restraint before rolling the central pawns forward. The knight on a3 keeps a check on the ...b7-b5 advance, but the crux of White's strategy rests on the fact that the e5 knight can no longer go forward. The g4 square is covered by the h-pawn and c4 is guarded by the a3 knight. White is now ready for f2-f4 with a view to forcing the knight back to d7.

14 ... ♗h5

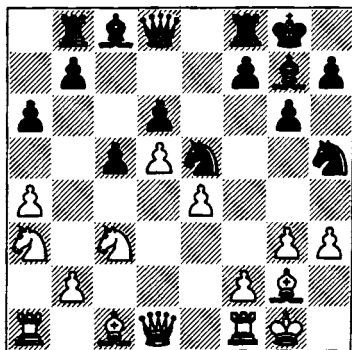
The stage is being set for a fierce tactical duel. Of course, Black has no intention of retreating meekly after 15 f4; the position flares up after 15...♖xg3 16 fxe5 ♗xe5; when the queen is coming to h4 and White's king appears extremely vulnerable. Those seeking a dynamic alternative to 14...♗h5 should look at the next game.

15 e4

This is the logical move as it cuts across Black's plan of ...f7-f5, a move which leads to complications in White's favour. However, in 1980 Jan Timman discovered a novelty which keeps the whole system in business.

15 ... ♜f8 (D)

It seems incredible that this 'retreat' is possible in such a tense position where time is usually of the essence. Attempts to directly refute the move, though, seem to run into trouble: 16 g4 ♙h4! 17 gxf5 ♗xf5, when Black is a piece



in arrears but the white king is in a very vulnerable position; e.g. 18 h6  $\text{♙h8}$  19  $\text{♚e2 f5!}$ .

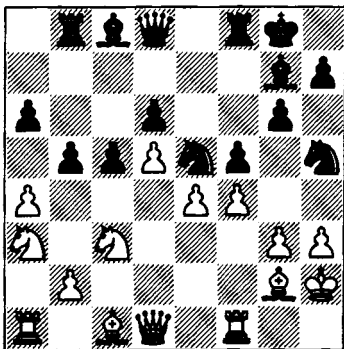
16  $\text{♙h2!}$

Korchnoi's treatment is very solid. The g3 pawn is now secured and the threat of f2-f4 looms.

16 ...  $\text{f5}$

Equally interesting is the move 16... $\text{♙d7}$ , calmly preparing the ...b7-b5 advance; e.g. 17 f4 b5 18 fxe5  $\text{♜xg3!}$  19  $\text{♙xg3 ♙xe5+}$  20  $\text{♙f3 b4}$  when Black is regaining a piece and the white king still looks highly vulnerable.

17 f4  $\text{b5!}$



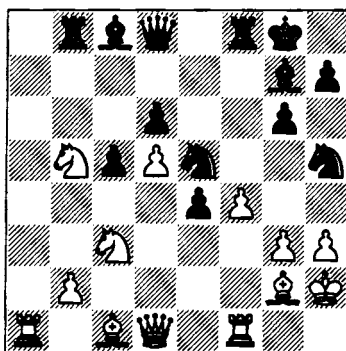
Throwing caution, and everything else, to the wind. It is rare to see a conflict which stretches right across the board.

Black's plan is clear: react to the problem on one wing by creating threats on the other. White could now grab the piece with 18 fxe5 leading to a new round of complications after 18... $\text{♙xe5}$  19  $\text{♚e2}$  (guarding the g3 pawn and avoiding the fork after ...b5-b4), when Black must keep up the momentum with 19... $\text{♜xg3!}$  20  $\text{♜xg3 f4}$ . White now has two moves, 21  $\text{♙g1}$  and 21  $\text{♙xf4}$ , both of which allow Black to regain some material, but who will be better in the resulting murky positions is anybody's guess!

Instead Korchnoi decides to hold the status quo on the king-side in order to resolve the issue on the other flank.

18  $\text{axb5}$   $\text{axb5}$

19  $\text{♚axb5}$   $\text{fxe4}$



The piece is still on offer, but it is far from clear that 20 fxe5 will

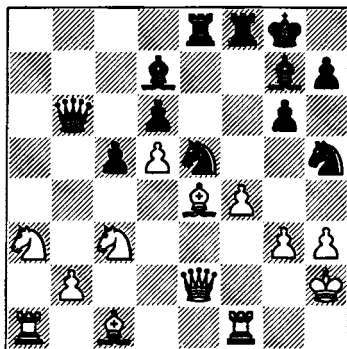


be good for White. After 20...♙xe5 the g3 pawn is still very vulnerable and it is hard for White to co-ordinate his pieces.

20 ♙xe4 ♙d7!

A remarkable concept, offering the important d6 pawn. After 21 ♖xd6 Black has the incredible resource 21...♜b6!! 22 ♜xe5 ♙xe5 23 ♖c4 ♙xg3+ 24 ♖g1 ♜bf6 25 ♙g2 ♜f2 with a devastating attack on the white king.

21 ♜e2 ♜b6  
22 ♖a3 ♜be8



Perhaps now White must grasp the nettle and capture the knight. Alternatively, White could try Kasparov's recommendation, 23 ♜g2!, to consolidate the position. Korchnoi's move allows Black to grab the initiative with a neat tactical trick.

23 ♙d2? ♜xb2!

Of course White intended to trap the queen with 24 ♜fb1, but this runs into 24...♖f3+ winning material.

24 ♜xe5?

It is now too late to bag the piece; 24 ♜a2 was preferable.

24 ... ♙xe5

25 ♖c4 ♖xg3!

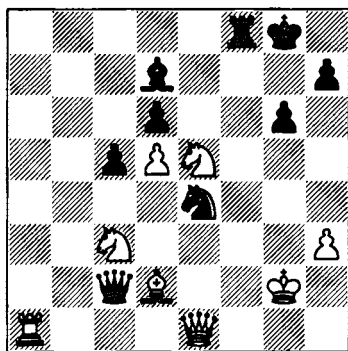
Tactic after tactic. 26 ♖xb2 ♖xe2+ and 27...♖xc3 wins decisive material.

26 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8

27 ♜e1! ♖xe4+

28 ♖g2 ♜c2

29 ♖xe5



29 ... ♜f2+?

The one blot on Kasparov's play, allowing White to fight back into the game.

30 ♜xf2! ♖xf2!

31 ♜a2! ♜f5

32 ♖xd7 ♖d3

33 ♙h6?

The way to play was 33 ♜a8+ ♖g7 34 ♜a7 ♜f2+ 35 ♖h1 ♜xd2 36 ♖e5+! and the circus continues.

33 ... ♜xd7

34 ♜a8+ ♖f7

35 ♜h8? ♖f6

36 ♖f3? ♜xh3+

White resigned

This epic struggle reflects great credit on both players. It helped to popularise the Modern Benoni

and illustrated many of the typical tactical ideas behind the opening.

## Game 23

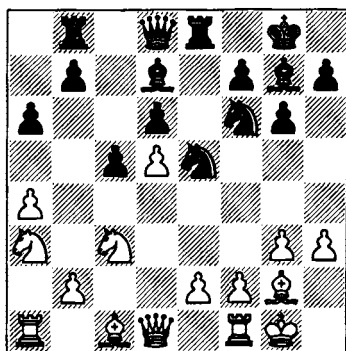
### Saeed – Norwood

#### London (Lloyds Bank Masters) 1984

(1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♜f3 g6 7 g3 ♙g7 8 ♙g2 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 ♜bd7 11 ♜d2 ♞e8 12 h3 ♞b8 13 ♜c4 ♜e5 14 ♜a3)

One might expect that my play in this game was inspired by the famous Korchnoi-Kasparov encounter of two years earlier. The truth is that I'd never even seen that game! All I knew about the position was that Black was supposed to sacrifice a piece somewhere along the line. So I began searching for ways to lose a piece and found...

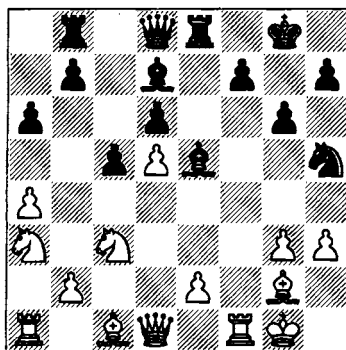
14 ... ♙d7!?



There is no surer way to lose a piece than to cut off its only

chance of retreat. Thinking it was Christmas my opponent continued...

15 f4 ♜h5  
16 fxe5 ♙xe5



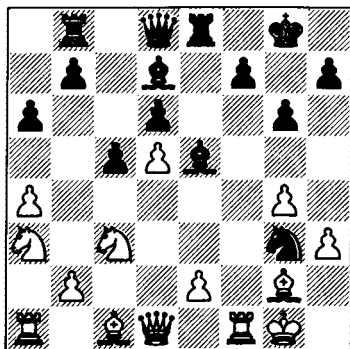
Black has sacrificed a piece, not for immediate benefit, but for long-term pressure. How does one judge whether such sacrifices are 'sound'? The first point to make is that 'sound' is a very subjective term. One could remark that 'with precise play the sacrifice is unsound'. But who plays precisely? Everyone makes mistakes, especially under pressure. Before a sacrifice is proved unsound, many problems might have to be solved. The chance of

human error is not given adequate attention when people consider sacrifices. Chessplayers are obsessed with the question of who, objectively, has the better position, but at the sub-super grandmaster level, there is an equally important question: whose position is easier to play? This position is a classic example. Objectively White may be better, but I know which side I'd prefer to play. Black is a piece behind, but all his remaining pieces are excellently placed, whilst White's kingside is vulnerable, and he must also contend with an attack on the other flank with ...b7-b5. The white pieces lack direction and the only plan is to try and survive the Black onslaught with the extra material intact – not exactly fun.

17 g4

The alternative was 17 ♖f4, but after 17... ♖xg3 18 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖f3 ♖f5 Black has excellent chances.

17 ... ♖g3



If White now tries to consolidate with 18 ♖f2, Black can pose more problems with 18...b5!. Coping with Black's advances on both sides of the board is no easy task; e.g. 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖c2 b4 21 ♖b1 (21 ♖e4 b3! and either 22 ♖e3 ♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖d4! or 21 ♖a3 ♖xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♖d4!) 21...f5!. With so many of White's pieces stuck in the queenside corner, this is the perfect time to open up the kingside. Once again, White's position is just very hard to play.

18 ♖c4?!

The reasoning behind this move is sound. White wants to relinquish the exchange in order to eliminate Black's active pieces. But he has overlooked a tactical resource:

18 ... ♖xc3!

19 bxc3 ♖xg4!!

The *coup de grâce*. The bishop cannot be captured in view of 20 hxg4 ♖xe2+ 21 ♖h2 ♖h4+ 22 ♖h3 ♖g3+ and 23... ♖xh3 mate.

20 ♖d3?

White's last chance was 20 ♖e1 ♖xe2+ 21 ♖h1 ♖xc1 22 ♖xc1 ♖e2 23 ♖f4 ♖xf1 24 ♖xf1.

20 ... ♖xe2+

21 ♖h2 ♖xc1

22 ♖c2

Or 22 ♖axc1 ♖e2 winning back the piece.

22 ... ♖e2

23 ♖f4 ♖d3

24 ♖e4 ♖xe4

25 ♖xe4 ♖f4

White resigned

Again we see Black adopting the classic strategy in the Modern Benoni: simultaneous attack on both sides of the board backed

by tactical resourcefulness and a willingness to relinquish material in order to maintain the initiative.

## Game 24

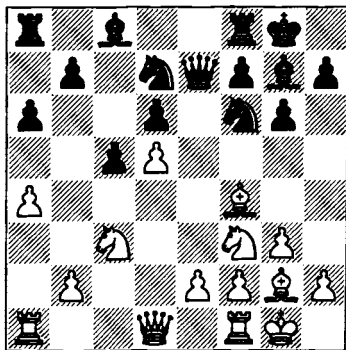
### Manor – Wahls

#### Berne Zonal 1990

(1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 a6 9 a4 0-0 10 0-0 ♘bd7)

Now 11 ♘d2 would lead to the lines considered at the start of this chapter. The next move gives the system independent character.

11 ♗f4 ♖e7



I prefer deploying the queen to e7 rather than c7 in this system. On e7 it seems to exert more influence on the centre, in particular the e5 square. The one thing that Black must beware of is the plan of ♖e1, e2-e4-e5 with an attack along the e-file.

12 a5

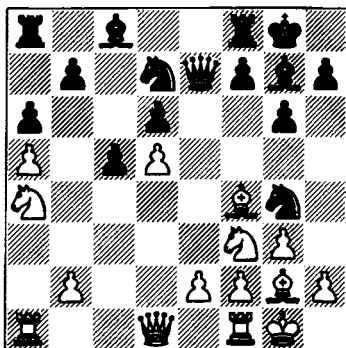
In view of Black's next move, 12 h3 should be considered as an alternative, preventing Black from establishing a rapid blockade on e5. Black could then try to mix things with 12...♘h5; e.g. 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗d2 f5!?. The position is very double-edged; for example, White could continue with 15 ♘g5 and now 15...♘e5 16 ♘e6 ♗xe6 17 dxe6 ♖b8. The question is whether the e6 pawn is an asset or a weakness? Playing ...f7-f5 is often a dilemma for Black. Although it creates weaknesses, especially the e6 square, it gains space and keeps a check on White's central expansion, whilst continuing the policy of causing White problems on both sides of the board.

12 ... ♘g4

This move is a common theme in the more positional Benoni systems. The knight manoeuvre ♘g4-e5 relieves the congestion in Black's position and establishes e5 as a stronghold for Black's minor pieces. It is important to note that before White can kick away a

piece from e5 with the pawn advance f2-f4, he must lose time in moving away the dark-squared bishop.

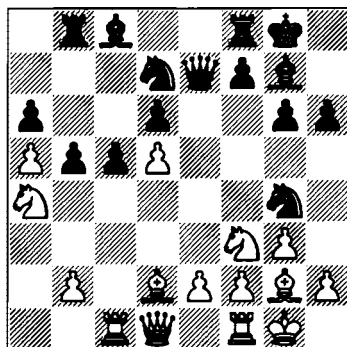
13 ♖a4



I'm going to stick my neck out here. After White has played a4-a5, the b6 square becomes a potential outpost for a white knight. My own feeling is that attempting to occupy this outpost is invariably bad. The time wasted in trying to get there is in itself considerable, but more importantly, White leaves his position rather stretched. The knight on c3 is a useful piece, controlling key central squares and limiting the scope of Black's fianchetto bishop on g7. Moreover, b6 may look like an attractive square for a white knight, but a knight on b6 is not exactly the end of the world for Black. Even if this piece cannot be challenged by another knight, it can usually simply be ignored!

13 ... ♜b8

14 ♜c1 h6  
15 ♖d2 b5



Black takes advantage of the lack of cohesion in his opponent's position to open up the game. The b2 pawn is particularly vulnerable and at some point White should probably play ♖c3 to neutralise the Benoni bishop.

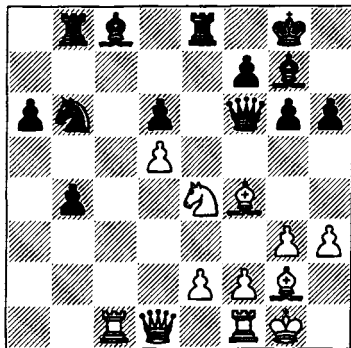
16 axb6 ♖xb6  
17 b4

White decides to continue aggressively, but Black's pieces are well placed to react to any fireworks. 17 ♖xb6 ♜xb6 18 ♖c3 would have been safer, though Black already stands well.

17 ... cxb4  
18 h3 ♖e5  
19 ♖xe5 ♜xe5  
20 ♖f4 ♜f6  
21 ♖c5

White has a temporary initiative for the pawn, and the plan is simply 22 ♖e4 to win the d6 pawn.

21 ... ♜e8!  
22 ♖e4

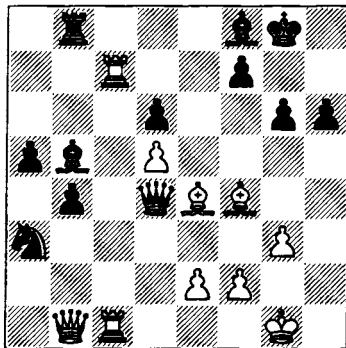


22 ... **Exe4**

Black returns material but regains the initiative. Sacrificing an exchange is often a good idea in the Benoni and in this example the combination of the fianchetto bishop and passed queenside pawns will be devastating. White really has no plan since the rooks cannot be utilised effectively. In addition, waiting for the a- and b-pawns to advance is not a pleasant prospect.

23 **Qxe4 Qxh3** 24 **Ne1 Qd7** 25 **Ne7 Qb5** 26 **Qb1 a5** 27 **Na7 Qc4** 28 **Qc1 Qd4** 29 **Ne7 Qf8** 30 **Ne7 Qa3!** (D)

White's position is hopeless.



31 **Qd1 Qxb1** 32 **Qxd4 Qc3**

Now White must lose yet another pawn and further resistance is useless.

33 **Qg2 Qxe2** 34 **Qd2 Qxf4+** 35 **gxf4 b3** 36 **f5 gxf5** 37 **Qxf5 a4** 38 **Qd4 a3** 39 **Qf4 Qg7** 40 **Qc3 Qe2** 41 **Na4 Qxc3** White resigned

### System with **Qf4**

The next game of this chapter features an interesting idea for Black which has rarely been seen in tournament play. I recommend it as a surprise weapon against 10 **Qf4**.

## Game 25

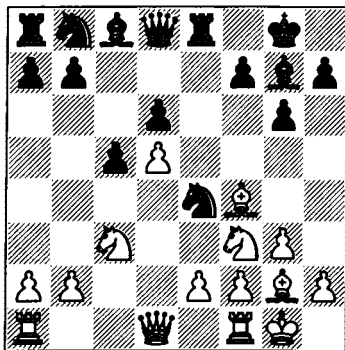
Kaidanov – Norwood  
Florida 1993

(1 **d4 Qf6** 2 **c4 e6** 3 **g3 c5** 4 **d5 exd5** 5 **cxd5 d6** 6 **Qc3 g6** 7 **Qg2 Qg7** 8 **Qf3 0-0 9 0-0**)

9 ... **Ne8**

10 **Qf4 Qe4!?** (D)

The idea behind this move is to cause disruption in the enemy camp. White is obliged to capture the knight, which leaves his b-pawn vulnerable.



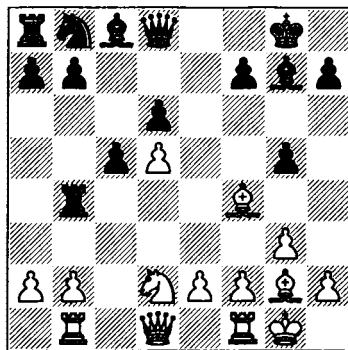
- 11 ♖xe4    ♜xe4  
12 ♖d2    ♜b4  
13 ♜b1

White has two very interesting alternatives here. First, 13 a3 ♜xf4! (13...♜xb2 14 ♖c4 is good for White) 14 gxf4 ♖xb2 15 ♜a2 ♖g7. I've had this position a couple of times with the black pieces. Although Black is the exchange for a pawn down, he has very interesting compensation. If White attempts to roll forward the central pawns with e4, then the f4 pawn becomes weak – especially when the knight attacks it via d7-f6-h5. Besides, there is also the prospect of attacking the white king, not to mention advancing the queenside pawns.

Another idea is 13 b3!? ♖xa1 14 ♜xa1 when it is White who is the exchange down, but Black will have problems along a1-h8 diagonal.

- 13 ...    g5! (D)

Neither 13...♖xb2 14 ♜c2 nor 13...♜xb2 14 ♜xb2 ♖xb2 15 ♖c4 is satisfactory; White's initiative is

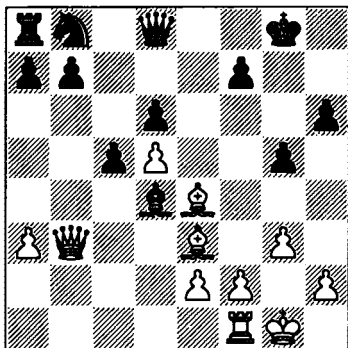


overwhelming. The move played gets my pieces out at the cost of weakening the kingside.

- 14 ♖e3    ♖f5  
15 a3    ♜xb2  
16 ♜xb2    ♖xb2  
17 ♖e4    h6  
18 ♜b3

Now after 18...♜b6 19 ♜xb6 axb6 20 ♖xd6 and 21 ♖c4, White has a big advantage. He also has ideas of a kingside attack with f4, so I decided to fight back by giving up two of my own pawns.

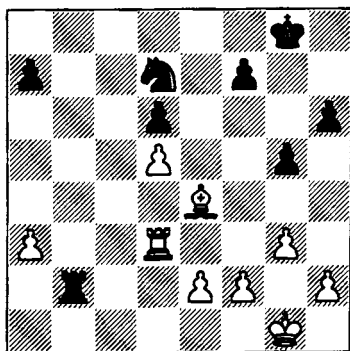
- 18 ...    ♖xe4  
19 ♖xe4    ♖d4!



20	♙xd4	cxd4
21	♖xb7	♙d7
22	♖b4	♗f6
23	♙d1	♙b8
24	♖xd4	♖xd4
25	♙xd4	

Now I am a pawn down, but the knight has good squares and my rook is active.

25	...	♙b3
26	♙d3	♙b2



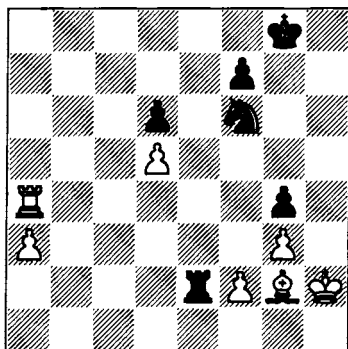
27	♙e3	♙f6
28	♙f3	♙d2?

Attacking the d-pawn is too obvious, and ...♙xd5 is not even a threat since White can then play ♙e8+ and ♙a8. Instead 28...a5!, followed by ...a4 and ...♙b3, should draw without any problems.

29	h3	h5
30	♙e7	a5
31	♙a7	g4
32	hxc4	hxc4
33	♙g2	♙xe2
34	♙xa5	♙e1+
35	♙h2	♙e2

Now I thought that I had saved the game, but White's reply came

as a nasty shock.  
36 ♙a4!



Now after 36...♙f2 37 ♙f4! ♙xf4 38 gxf4 the passed a-pawn wins the ending for White. With only a few seconds remaining on my clock, I found the only defence.

36	...	♙f8!
37	♙f4	♙e7
38	♙f1	♙a2
39	a4	♙xd5
40	♙c4	♙xf4
41	♙xa2	♙d3
42	a5	♙d7!

The king must block the a-pawn and the knight holds everything after 43 ♙g2 ♙e5!.

43	♙xf7	♙xf2
44	♙g2	♙d3
45	♙c4	♙c5!
46	♙d5	♙c7
47	♙f2	♙d7!

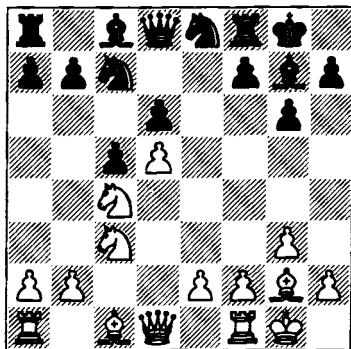
The knight prepares to create a diversion by attacking g3.

48	♙e3	♙f6
49	♙f7	♙b7
50	♙f4	♙a6
51	♙f5	♙d7
52	♙h5	♙xa5
53	♙xg4	♙b6
54	♙h5	♙e5
55	♙e6	♙c5
56	♙d1	♙c6

Draw agreed







then 14 d6 winning back the material with interest.

**12 a4 b6**

Obviously Black would like to play directly for ...b7-b5 but 12...a6 would allow 13 a5. The drawback of the knight being on c7 rather than d7, is that it exerts no influence over the b6 square. By playing 12...b6, Black prevents the a4-a5 advance and gives the bishop scope to enter the game via a6.

**13 ♖d2**

A curious-looking move that seems to block the bishop on c1 out of the game. However, White needs to be able to reinforce the knight on c4 if Black plays ...♙a6. By playing ♖d2 he prepares b2-b3, allowing the bishop to be developed on the long diagonal. Remember, this system involves slow, strategic manoeuvring.

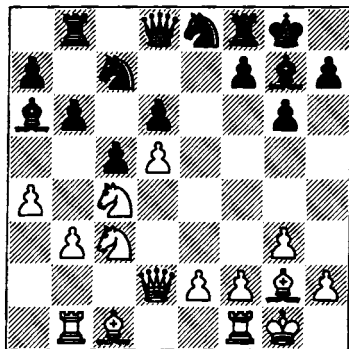
**13 ... ♜b8**

**14 ♜b1 ♙a6**

**15 b3 (D)**

**15 ... b5**

**16 ♘a5!**



This is more testing than 16 axb5 ♘xb5 17 ♘xb5 ♙xb5 18 ♘a5 ♜b6 19 ♘c6 ♜b7, when Black's position holds together very well.

**16 ... ♜d7**

One should resist the temptation to push a pawn with 16...b4. The knight retreats to d1, from where it will re-deploy at its leisure to e3 and then to c4. Black has the extra pawn on the queen-side and if it becomes blockaded, White is essentially playing a pawn up! Keeping the tension is usually the best strategy.

**17 ♘c6 ♜b7**

**18 axb5 ♘xb5**

**19 ♘xb5 ♜xb5**

**20 ♜a2 ♜b6**

**21 ♙b2 ♙b5**

Black is of course happy to trade the a-pawn for the e2 pawn.

**22 ♙xg7 ♘xg7**

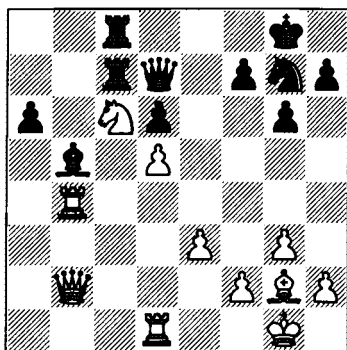
**23 b4**

White must try to keep the initiative; 23 b4 destroys the harmony of Black's pawns.

**23 ... cxb4**

**24 ♜xb4 a6**

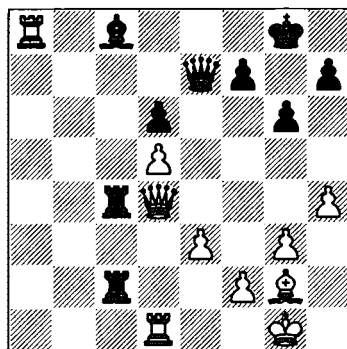
25 ♖e1 ♜b7  
 26 e3 ♜c7  
 27 ♜b2 ♜fc8  
 28 ♜d1



I must admit to being completely confused by this position. It would appear that White is better on general principles, but neither side seems to be doing much! This shuffling continues for quite some time.

28... ♜e8 29 h4 ♜f8 30 ♜d4  
 ♜d7 31 ♜b6 a5 32 ♜c6 ♜f5 33  
 ♜a6 ♜e7 34 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 35 ♜xa5  
 ♜c2 36 ♜d4 ♜8c4 37 ♜a8+ ♜c8

After a long merry dance White has won a pawn, but the activity of Black's pieces gives some compensation.



38 ♜b6 ♜f6 39 e4 ♜c5 40 ♜f1  
 ♜g7 41 ♜b8 ♜5c3 42 ♜a5 Draw  
 agreed

## Game 27

### Hausner – Razuvayev

#### Bundesliga 1991

(1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 c5 4 d5  
 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♜c3 g6 7 ♜g2  
 ♜g7 8 ♜f3 0-0 9 0-0 ♜a6)

10 ♖e1 ♜e8 (D)

11 e4?!

With this move White allows the bishop to enter the game with a pin on g4. It was worth taking a time-out with 11 h3 (a useful move in any case). How should Black continue after 11 h3 here?

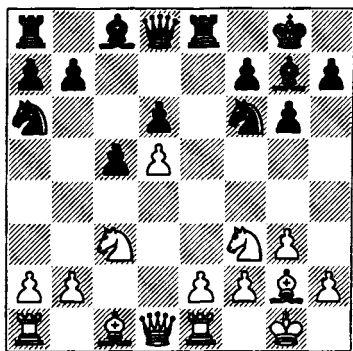
One idea is 11... ♜e4; e.g. 12 ♜xe4  
 ♜xe4 13 ♜g5 ♜f8! and Black can  
 develop freely.

11 ... ♜g4!

Exchanging the light-squared bishop for the knight on f3 works fine in the Classical system; and there is no reason why it should not be okay here.

12 ♜f4 ♜d7?!

Black is obviously trying to



provoke a tactical duel here. If 13  $\text{♙xd6}$  then 13... $\text{♜b6}$ , hitting the bishop and the b2 pawn. Now the knight is free to occupy the e5 square, since the influence of the f3 knight has been curtailed by the bishop on g4.

13  $\text{♜b3}$   $\text{♙xf3}$

One might be tempted to delay capturing the knight until prompted by h2-h3, but beware! The knight on f3 was ready to retreat to d2, preparing for f2-f3 which would force the light-squared bishop into ignominious retreat.

14  $\text{♙xf3}$   $\text{♞e5!}$

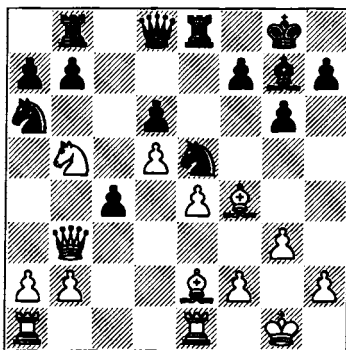
Black offers a pawn which White would be ill-advised to accept; e.g. 15  $\text{♙xe5}$   $\text{♙xe5}$  16  $\text{♜xb7}$   $\text{♞b4}$  and White's position is already in ruins. The black knight is coming into c2 or d3, the queen to f6 and a rook can take the b-file at leisure.

15  $\text{♙e2}$   $\text{♜b8}$

Black continues with great energy. Now White can double the pawns with 16  $\text{♙xa6}$  but Black

would win material by 16... $\text{♞f3+}$  17  $\text{♙h1 bxa6}$ .

16  $\text{♞b5?!}$   $\text{c4!}$



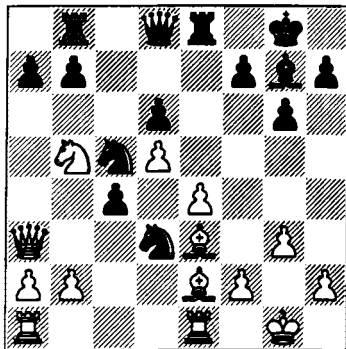
Classic Benoni play; Black keeps the initiative with repeated tactical blows. White has had plenty of chances to win material but the time it would take would be too costly. Now 17  $\text{♙xc4}$  is well met by 17... $\text{♞c5}$  bringing yet another piece into the fray with tempo. The queen is overworked and unable to guard against both 18... $\text{♞xc4}$  and 18... $\text{♞f3+}$ .

17  $\text{♜a3}$   $\text{♞c5}$

Again Black is not counting pawns. 18  $\text{♞xa7}$  is suicidal in view of 18... $\text{♜a8}$  and both the e4 pawn and the d3 square look vulnerable. White cannot simplify with 18  $\text{♙xe5}$   $\text{♙xe5}$  19  $\text{♙xc4}$  because of 19...a6!, when the knight must retreat with 20  $\text{♞c3}$  and now 20...b5 and 21...b4 nets a piece.

18  $\text{♙e3}$   $\text{♞ed3 (D)}$

A very pleasant position for Black; all his pieces are in harmony. Once again, attempts to



simplify backfire: 19 ♖xc5 ♖xb2!  
20 ♜xa7 ♘xc5 and 21...♙a8 will  
trap the queen.

19 ♘xd6 ♖xb2

20 ♜xb2

Bad, but what else?

20 ... ♘xb2

21 ♖xc5 ♜e7

22 ♖a3 b5

23 ♙ab1 ♘d3

24 ♖xd3 cxd3  
25 e5 d2  
26 ♜e2 b4!  
27 ♖b2 ♜xd6!  
28 exd6 ♜xe2  
29 ♜f1 d1♚+!

Faced with the prospect of being a rook in arrears, **White resigned**.

A very crisp game by Black. White played inaccurately but did nothing obviously silly. This illustrates how rapidly White's position can collapse when Black seizes the initiative.

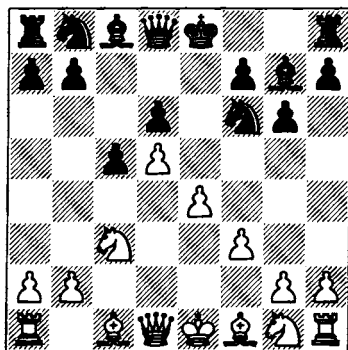
This brings us to the end of chapter on Fianchetto systems. The above games demonstrate that Black has an abundance of resources with which to counter White's set-up.

The Sämisch is another system for White that commonly arises from a King's Indian Defence. For example, 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 c5 7 d5 e6, and after ...exd5 White will recapture with cxd5, leaving us with a Modern Benoni structure. In fact, Black players who adopt a Modern Benoni move order (i.e. with ...c5 on move two or three) are less likely to face this system, since the Flick-Knife Attack and Modern Classical variations are so fashionable. Still, this is a perfectly respectable way for White to play and you have to be prepared to meet it.

Let us assume that we reach the variation from a Modern Benoni move order:

- |        |         |
|--------|---------|
| 1 d4   | ♖f6     |
| 2 c4   | c5      |
| 3 d5   | e6      |
| 4 ♘c3  | exd5    |
| 5 cxd5 | d6      |
| 6 e4   | g6      |
| 7 f3   | ♗g7 (D) |

White's last move, 7 f3, gives the system its character. The immediate point is clear: to secure the e4 pawn. Unlike the Sämisch variation in the King's Indian, however, White is not preparing to castle long and storm the kingside with g2-g4 and h4-h5; Black's fianchetto bishop and



queenside pawn majority make castling on this flank far too dangerous. Instead, White wants to develop freely behind his secured centre before turning the screw in the middlegame.

We can see from the diagram that White will not be developing in the usual way. For example, the g1 knight is denied the natural f3 square; hence the manoeuvre ♘f3-d2-c4 is ruled out. The dark-squared bishop will usually deploy to g5 (though e3 is another possibility) where it can dominate the c1-h6 diagonal with the help of the queen on d2. The light-square bishop is clearly a slow starter; it will sit on either e2 or d3 depending on how the g1 knight enters the game. The knight can be brought to e2 where it may manoeuvre to c1, f4 or g3; or perhaps could head for f2 via h3.

The Sämisch system is not suited to the White player who is looking for a quick knockout but it does have its merits. By securing e4 (typically a focal point for Black's counterplay), White is well placed to restrain any queen-side expansion – forcing through ...b7-b5 without any decoy threats on e4 is well nigh impossible.

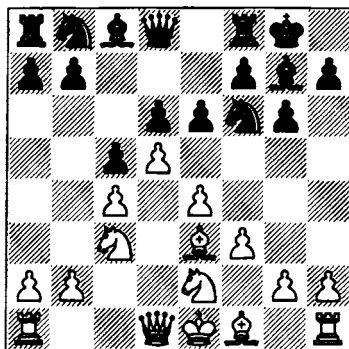
Black has the sensation of banging his head against a brick wall sometimes, but my advice is *be patient*. Dynamic counterplay will come, but in this system it does take time. Indeed, one of White's main ideas is to do nothing until Black runs out of ideas. Only then does he start to play actively himself.

## Game 28

### Seirawan – Ivanchuk

#### Roquebrune (five-minute) 1992

- |          |     |
|----------|-----|
| 1 d4     | ♠f6 |
| 2 c4     | g6  |
| 3 ♖c3    | ♙g7 |
| 4 e4     | d6  |
| 5 f3     | 0-0 |
| 6 ♙e3    | c5  |
| 7 d5     | e6  |
| 8 ♖ge2!? |     |



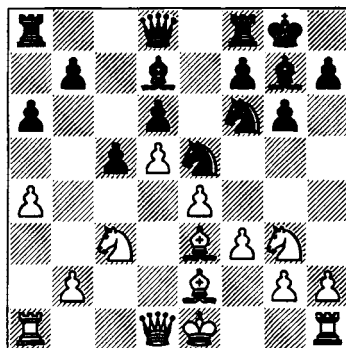
White usually plays 8 ♗d2 here, waiting for Black to play 8...exd5 9 cxd5 ♖bd7 when 10 ♖h3! followed by ♖f2 solves the

problem of where to put the king's knight. Naturally Black should play 9...a6 10 a4 ♗e8, delaying ...♖bd7 and thereby tempting White to play 11 ♖ge2.

- |        |      |
|--------|------|
| 8 ...  | exd5 |
| 9 cxd5 | a6   |
| 10 a4  | ♖bd7 |

With the white knight on e2, this move is now fully playable.

- |        |     |
|--------|-----|
| 11 ♖g3 | ♖e5 |
| 12 ♙e2 | ♙d7 |



13 0-0 b5!

Since White has not played the customary ♖d2, Black takes advantage of the weakened b2 pawn to launch his queenside play in one go rather than playing the preparatory ...♞b8.

14 axb5 axb5

15 ♖xb5

What else? White's normal way of combating Black's ...b7-b5 advance is to play ♖ab1 and wait to answer ...b7-b5 with b2-b4!, which usually forces Black to play ...c5-c4 gaining a protected passed pawn. Although such a pawn would be a real asset in an endgame, with all the pieces still on the board White has managed to halt Black's queenside advance and will now look to play f3-f4 followed by e4-e5 without distraction. The concept of meeting ...b7-b5 with b2-b4 is one of the 'tricks' that the White player of the Sämisch variation relies on, as after Black is forced to play ...c5-c4, it is White who will play on the a-file and use the d4 square for his knight.

15 ... ♖xb5

16 ♖xb5 ♞b6

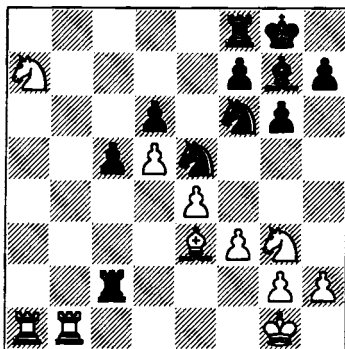
17 ♞e2 ♞ab8

18 ♖a7 ♞xb2

19 ♞xb2 ♞xb2

20 ♞fb1 ♞c2 (D)

Even with level material, White is struggling to hold. After 20...♞c2, the position resembles a 'good' Benko Gambit, in which Black has regained his sacrificed



pawn. All Benko players know that once the sacrificed pawn is regained, Black can look forward to a far superior endgame thanks to his protected passed c-pawn. Besides, here White's knight on a7 is on limb whereas Black's counterpart on e5 is influencing the vital c4, d3 and g4 squares.

21 ♞a6 ♖c4

22 ♖f4 ♞a8!

White is probably lost now. The artificial positioning of White's pieces cannot generate enough counterplay against Black's only weakness – the d6 pawn. As if his structural deficiencies are not bad enough, White's king is also in serious danger of being mated.

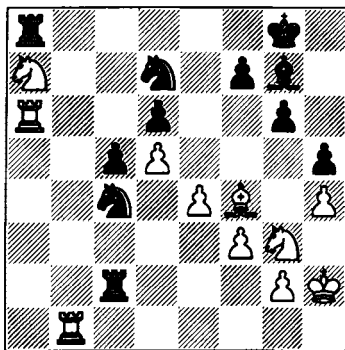
23 h4 ♖d7

24 ♖h2 h5! (D)

A good move which merely serves to highlight how lacking in prospects White's position really is. The pin on the a-file is deadly; Black is in effect trading his rook on a8 for a knight and a rook and is practically a piece up!

25 ♖h3 ♖de5

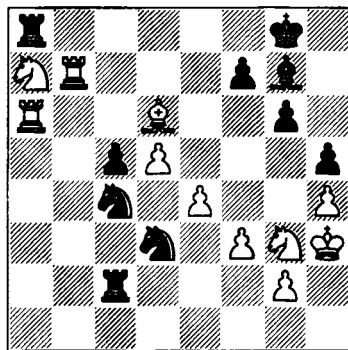




26 ♖b7 ♘d3

27 ♙xd6 (D)

White must stay on the b8-h2 diagonal, as 27 ♙g5 ♙e5! concedes all the squares. White finally manages to win the d6 pawn but only because Black has a forced win.



27... ♙e3 28 ♖h1 ♙xg2 29 ♙c6 ♙gf4+ 30 ♙xf4 ♙xf4+ 31 ♙g3 ♙e5 32 ♖f2 ♙d3+ 33 f4 ♙xf4+ 34 ♙g2 ♙xf2+ 35 ♙g1 ♙e3 36 ♖h1 ♙e5 White resigned

A good illustration of Black completely ruining White's strategy.

## Game 29 Yusupov – Gelfand Munich 1993

(1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♙g5 c5 7 d5 e6)

8 ♖d2 h6

9 ♙e3

9 ♙xh6 fails to 9... ♙xe4! and ... ♖h4+.

9 ... exd5

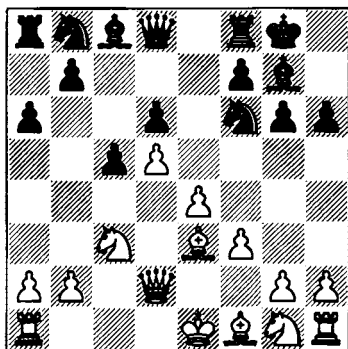
10 cxd5 a6 (D)

Based on the same trick: 11 ♙xh6? ♙xe4! 12 ♙xe4 ♖h4+ followed by queen or bishop takes h6 with advantage to Black.

11 ♙c1?! ♙e8

12 b3?!

Taking the policy of allowing



Black to show his cards first too far. It is true that White has a basic structural advantage in the

Sämisch system, but Black's tactical possibilities are varied enough to counteract this. As a result, White cannot allow Black to get going on the queenside free of charge.

12 ... b5  
13 ♖d3 b4!?

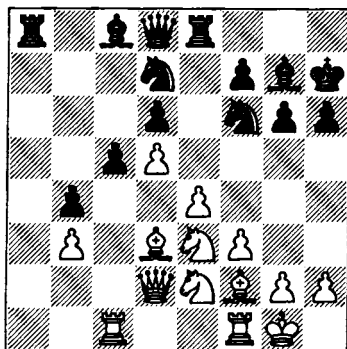
Usually, this committal move is considered bad as Black loses much of the fluidity in his pawn structure. If the white pawn on a2 was on a4, Black would have the typical hopeless Benoni: the queenside is closed with the c4 square unprotected (White will eventually put a knight on c4 free of charge) and White will slowly strangle Black on the kingside. However, the crucial difference in this game is that the white pawn is not on a4 and so Black can still use the a-file for his rooks.

14 ♘d1 a5  
15 ♘e2 a4  
16 0-0 axb3  
17 axb3 ♕h7

It is only here that we can see Black's clever idea. Although he has closed the position up with the move 13...b4, the a-file cannot even be challenged by White because the bishop on g7 controls the vital a1 square.

18 ♙f2 ♘bd7  
19 ♘e3 (D)

The knight heads for the only weakness created by Black's ambitious plan. Modern chess strategists recommend that a flank attack is best met by an attack in

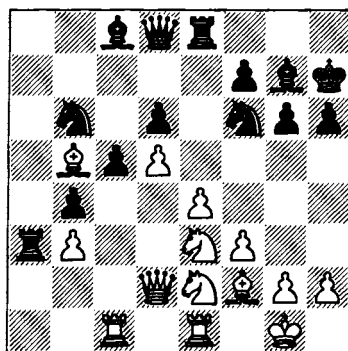


the centre. However, White does not have enough time to organise his only central idea in the position: f3-f4 followed by e4-e5. Instead of 18 ♙f2, 18 ♘f2 would have prepared f3-f4, but since White has no means of playing e4-e5, f3-f4 can only weaken his position.

19 ... ♘b6

Staking a claim to the c4 square.

20 ♜fe1 ♜a3  
21 ♙b5?



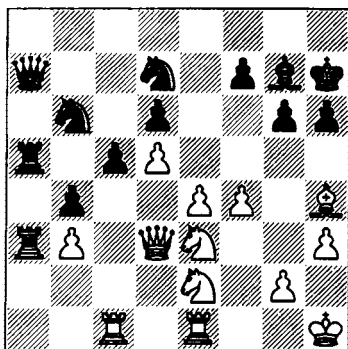
A weak move which forces Black to play the best reply! 21

♙c2? was also a mistake after 21...♙a6! with total domination, but the odd-looking 21 ♙c4 was White's best chance to hold the position.

21 ...	♞e7
22 ♜d3	♞ea7
23 h3	♙a6
24 ♙xa6	♞7xa6

Black can now invade on the light squares.

25 ♙h4	♞e8
26 ♙g3	♞e7
27 ♙h4	♞a7
28 ♚h1	♜fd7
29 f4	♞6a5!



An important move which restrains White's e4-e5 by defending along the fifth rank.

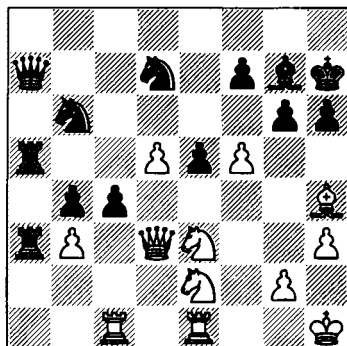
30 e5?

Falling for Black's trick. Since Black has systematically placed all his pieces with this move in mind, White would have been better advised to have kept the tension.

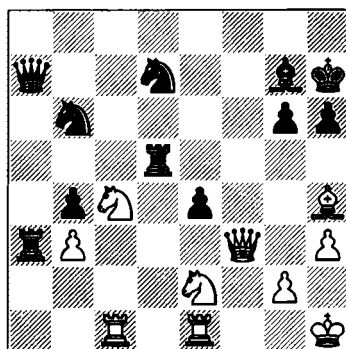
30 ...	dx e5
31 f5	

A common attacking theme though White has nothing in this position. See Game 31 for a more favourable position for White along the same lines.

31 ...	c4!
--------	-----



32 fxc6+	fxg6
33 ♜xc4	♞xd5
34 ♞f3	e4!!



This thematic King's Indian move frees the bishop on g7 and activates the last idle piece, the knight on d7. The rest is simply technique:

35 ♞xe4	♜c5	36 ♞e8	♞f5	37
---------	-----	--------	-----	----

♖d6 ♜f8 38 ♜b5 ♜xb3 39 ♜cd1  
 ♜a5 40 ♜c6 ♜c5 41 ♜b7 ♜a5 42  
 ♜e4 ♜e3 43 ♜b1 b3 44 ♜d3  
 ♜xd3 45 ♜xd3 ♜d5 46 ♜g3 g5

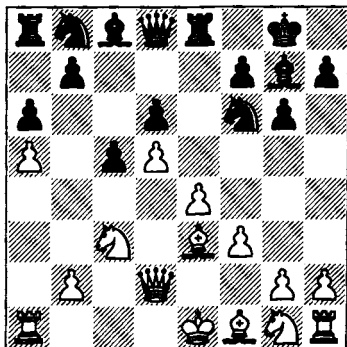
47 ♜xg5 ♜xg5 48 ♜d3+ ♜g6 49  
 ♜e4 b2 50 g3 ♜d8 51 ♜f3 ♜d5 52  
 ♜f4 ♜xf4 53 gxf4 ♜f8 54 ♜d2  
 ♜c4 White resigned

### Game 30

## Kraidman – Har Zvi

### Tel Aviv 1992

(1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4  
 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♜e3 c5 7 d5 e6 8  
 ♜d2 exd5 9 cxd5 ♜e8)  
 10 a4 a6  
 11 a5?

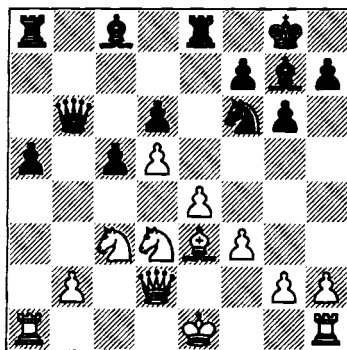


White shows a lack of understanding of the subtleties of the variation. One of Black's main problems in this line is that he must waste a lot of moves preparing ...b7-b5; and only then does White play the cramping a4-a5. In this position Black manages to play the thematic advance in one move.

11 ... b5  
 12 axb6 ♜xb6  
 13 ♜d3? ♜bd7

Black willingly allows White to develop his knight to h3, since he can then exchange the bishop on d3. 13 ♜e2 was a superior move.

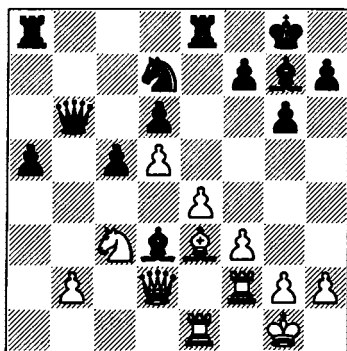
14 ♜h3 ♜e5  
 15 ♜f2 ♜xd3+  
 16 ♜xd3 a5!



The only advantage White obtained from his early a4-a5 advance was the weakness of the a6 pawn in Black's camp. Having removed one of the attackers of this pawn, the bishop on d3, Black finds a diagonal for his bishop and relieves himself of this weakness.

17 0-0 ♜a6  
 18 ♜f2 ♜d7

19 ♖e1 ♕xd3!

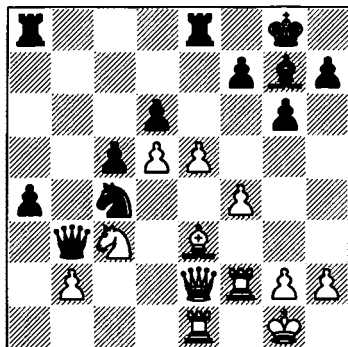


Black shows good understanding of the position. The two bishops are of no importance here and the black knight on e5 will do just as effective a job on the light squares as the bishop would. Note how the position after 19...♕xd3 is a 'sign of success' for Black. White's structure is now riddled with weaknesses and Black has obtained queenside counterplay without making any concessions on the kingside. Had White managed to develop some sort of attack in the centre or on the king's flank, the position would be dynamically balanced. As it is, Black has no such worries and is free to roam on the queen's wing.

20 ♖xd3 ♖e5  
 21 ♖e2 ♖b3  
 22 f4 ♖c4  
 23 e5 a4!

A good policy. After 23...dxe5 24 ♕xc5 I still prefer Black, though the position has a more random element about it which can only

benefit White. Ignoring the e4-e5 advance, when it finally arrives, is a typical Black scheme. It is only dangerous when White can continue pushing the pawn with e5-e6.



24 ♖e4

Not 24 e6? fxe6 25 ♕c1 when 25...♕d4 wins.

24 ... f5!

25 ♖xd6

If 25 ♖g5 then 25...dxe5 26 ♖e6 ♖xe3 27 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 28 ♖xe3 e4 is good for Black.

25 ... ♖xd6

26 exd6 ♖xd5

27 ♖d2

A better try was 27 ♖d1 ♕d4 28 ♖d2 ♖xd6? (28...♖e4!) 29 ♕xd4 cxd4 30 ♖xd4 ♖e1+ 31 ♖f1 with a drawn position.

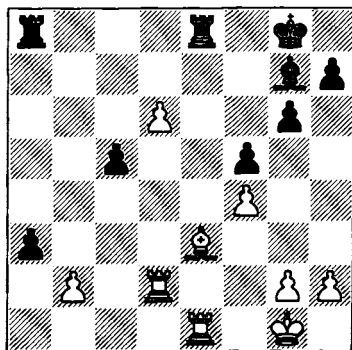
27 ... ♖xd2

28 ♖xd2 a3! (D)

29 d7 ♖ed8

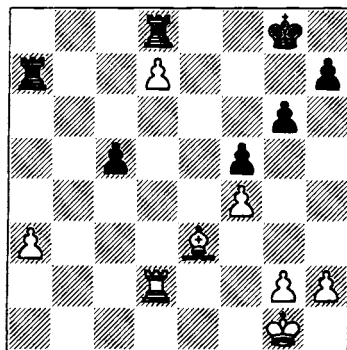
30 bxa3

White could not allow a pawn on the seventh rank; 30 ♖ed1 axb2 31 ♕xc5 ♖a1 is hopeless.



30 ...      ♖c3  
31 ♖ed1    ♖xd2  
32 ♖xd2    ♖a7!

Not 32... ♖xa3? 33. ♖xc5 and Black is in trouble. If White could keep his rook on the board, he might have drawing chances. However, Black can force the exchange.



33 ♖xc5    ♖axd7  
34 ♖e2    ♖d1+

White's situation is hopeless.

35 ♖f2 ♖8d2 36 ♖b4 ♖xe2+ 37 ♖xe2 ♖b1 38 ♖d3 ♖f7 39 ♖c3 ♖e6 40 ♖c4 ♖d6 41 a4 ♖c6 42 a5 ♖h1 43 g3 ♖xh2 44 ♖f6 ♖d2 45 ♖h4 ♖d5 46 a6 ♖a5 47 ♖d4 ♖d6 White resigned

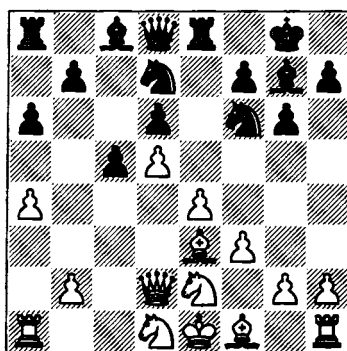
### Game 31 Meulders – Douven Tilburg 1993

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 0-0 5 f3 c5 6 d5 d6 7 ♖e3 e6 8 ♖d2 exd5 9 cxd5 a6 10 a4 ♖e8)

Keeping to the policy of not allowing White to develop his knight to h3.

11 ♖ge2    ♖bd7  
12 ♖d1!? (D)

White devises a cunning way of getting the desired knight formation. Here the knight on e2 will go to c3 and the knight on d1 to f2. The drawback of this move is that 12 ♖d1!? breaks one of the basic



principles of chess: moving a piece twice in the opening. However,

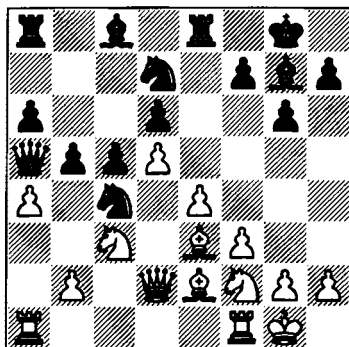
the closed nature of the position ensures that White will not be punished for this.

- 12 ... ♖e5  
13 ♖ec3 ♗a5  
14 ♖e2!

White players had previously relied on 14 ♖a3 to stem Black's queenside play. However, after 14...♗b4!, with the idea of ...♖e5-c4, Black is doing well. 14 ♖e2 does allow Black the immediate queenside pawn storm but White will capitalise on the awkward position of the black queen on a5.

- 14 ... b5  
15 0-0 ♖fd7  
16 ♖f2 ♖c4

After 16...b4 notice the difference between this position and Game 29: 17 ♖cd1 ♖b6 18 ♖h6! ♖h8 19 ♖e3 gives White a huge advantage as Black has no play on the queenside and the c4 square is unprotected.



- 17 ♖xc4 bxc4  
18 f4 ♖b8  
19 e5! dxe5

## 20 ♖fe4

The immediate 20 f5 fails to the simple 20...gx f5!

## 20 ... ♗b6?!

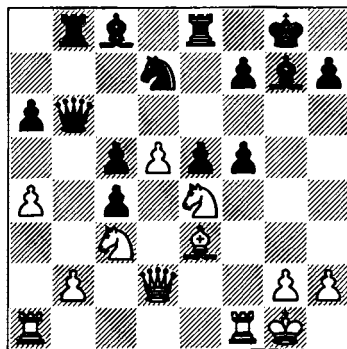
Black goes astray. He had two plausible alternatives, one good and one bad:

a) 20...exf4 21 ♖xf4 ♖a8 (or 21...♖b6 22 ♖c7!; 21...♖b7 22 ♖d6) 22 ♖h6 and Black's position is on the verge of collapse.

b) 20...f5!? 21 ♖d6 ♖f8 22 ♖xc4 ♗b4 23 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 24 fxe5 ♖xe5 25 d6 ♖e6 is Black's best chance.

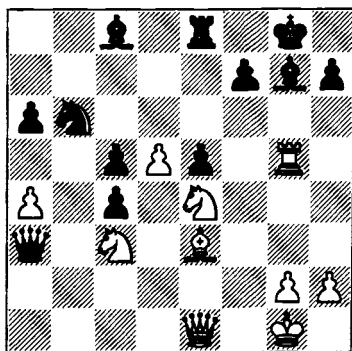
## 21 f5! gx f5?

Now Black's extra pawn counts for nothing as White launches a ferocious and thematic attack. Instead 21...♗xb2 is met by 22 ♗e1! with the idea of ♖ab1.



- 22 ♖xf5 ♗xb2  
23 ♗e1! ♖b6  
24 ♖b1 ♗a3  
25 ♖xb6 ♖xb6  
26 ♖g5! (D)

If we compare the position overleaf to that of Game 29, the crucial difference is that White



has managed to cover e4 here, albeit at the cost of a pawn. Gelfand played 34...e4!!, liberating his dark-squared bishop, and soon won. Here Black has no chance of doing that and White's knight on e4 is simultaneously defending and attacking. Many Benoni players have learnt a harsh lesson from attacks of this nature.

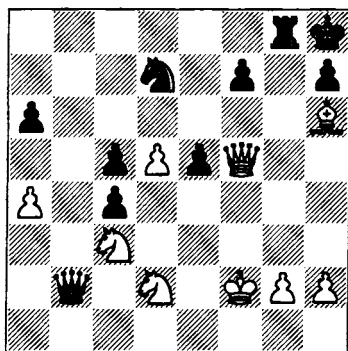
- 26 ... ♖h8  
 27 ♙xg7! ♖xg7  
 28 ♗g3+ ♖h8  
 29 ♙h6 ♗a1+  
 30 ♖f2 ♗b2+  
 31 ♘d2 ♙g4!

The only move as 31...♙g8? 32 ♗xe5+ is mate.

- 32 ♗xg4

Not 32 ♗h4? ♘d7! 33 ♗g5 ♙g8 and Black is in the driving seat.

- 32 ... ♙g8  
 33 ♗f5 ♘d7!



A good try by Black, but White is totally on top.

- 34 ♘e2 ♗b6  
 35 ♙e3 ♗f6  
 36 ♗xf6+ ♘xf6  
 37 d6! ♙d8

37...♘g4+ 38 ♖f3 f5 (38...♘h2+ 39 ♖e4 ♘g4 40 ♘xc4 is winning for White) 39 h3 gives White a clear advantage according to Meulders. White now mops up.

38 ♙xc5 ♙c8 39 ♙b4 ♖g8 40 ♘c3 ♘d7 41 ♘de4 f6 42 ♘d5 ♖f7 43 a5 c3 44 ♙xc3 ♙c4 45 ♖e3 f5 46 ♘g5+ ♖g6 47 ♘f3 ♙c5 48 ♘e7+ ♖f6 49 ♖d2 h6 50 ♙b4 ♙c4 51 ♘d5+ ♖e6 52 ♘c7+ ♖f7 53 ♙c3 e4 54 ♘e5+ ♘xe5 55 ♙xe5 ♙c5 56 d7 ♖e7 57 ♙d6+! ♖xd7 58 ♙xc5 ♖xc7 59 ♖e3 ♖c6 60 ♙b6 ♖b5 61 ♖f4 ♖c4 62 ♖xf5 ♖d3 63 ♖f4 Black resigned



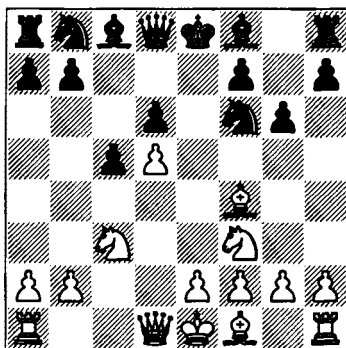
In the early 1980s the system with 7 ♖f4 was all the rage. White's opening play is quite natural: deploy the knight to f3 and the bishop to f4. On f4 the bishop hits the Achilles' heel of the Benoni, the d6 pawn, and this allows White the possibility of giving a disruptive check along the a4-e8 diagonal; e.g. ♜a4+ ♙d7, ♜b3 and Black must now defend the d6 pawn.

This system followed the usual evolutionary trend of chess openings. White's success with the early ♖f4 lines prompted many Benoni players to search long and hard for antidotes. By the end of the decade the system had suffered a sharp regression in popularity as Black's results improved and now it is rarely seen in international play.

The standard position arises after:

- |       |      |
|-------|------|
| 1 d4  | ♞f6  |
| 2 c4  | c5   |
| 3 d5  | e6   |
| 4 ♞c3 | exd5 |

- |        |    |
|--------|----|
| 5 cxd5 | d6 |
| 6 ♞f3  | g6 |
| 7 ♖f4  |    |



Now Black already faces a major dilemma: should he play 7...♙g7 or 7...a6 here? Even after a great deal of experience with this system I am unsure which of these to recommend. 7...♙g7 leads to very sharp tactical play, and Black has to sacrifice a pawn to avoid an inferior game; but 7...a6 is safer and seems to have been accepted as the more reliable way to treat the ♖f4 system. We consider 7...♙g7 first.

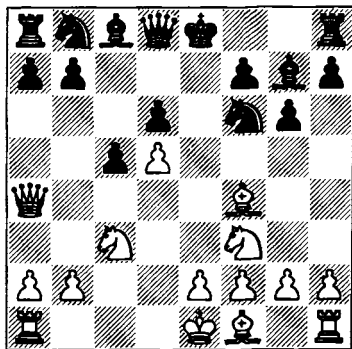
### Game 32

### Barlov – Zelčić

### Biel 1991

(1 d4 ♞f6 2 ♞f3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5  
exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♞c3 g6 7 ♖f4)

7 ... ♙g7  
8 ♜a4+



This is the only move to test 7...♙g7; the solid 8 e4 lacks punch. White's seemingly innocent check is surprisingly disruptive. Now 8...♙d7 will lose a pawn to simply 9 ♙xd6. I once conducted a disastrous experiment with 8...♙bd7 9 ♙xd6 ♙b6, hoping for compensation against b2, but White played the devastating 10 ♙f4! threatening 11 ♙e3+ and Black is lost.

8 ... ♙d7

9 ♙b3

Two black pawns are under attack. Since 9...♙c8 is obviously a sorry way to defend, 9...♙c7 used to be the accepted move in this position. We now embark on a long stream of analysis to demonstrate why this move leaves Black in difficulties after 10 e4 0-0 11 ♙d2!. If Black now continues routinely then White will reach an ideal position; e.g. 11...♙e8 12 f3 a6 13 ♙c4 and the d6 pawn is a problem. However, Black has some dynamic opportunities after 11...♙h5 12 ♙e3 f5 13 exf5 gxf5 (13...♙xf5

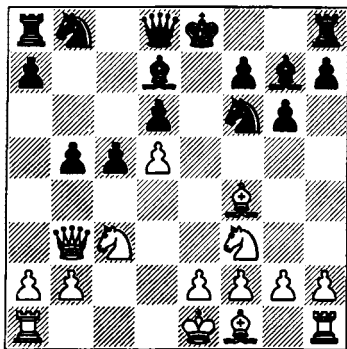
looks logical but Black will soon be forced back; e.g. 14 ♙e2 ♙f6 15 h3! and ...♙bd7 is not possible in view of g2-g4 winning the bishop) 14 ♙e2. John Nunn's book failed to consider this move, giving only 14 g3 ♙a6 15 ♙e2 f4! as being good for Black. Presumably Nunn analysed only 14 ♙e2 f4 15 ♙xh5 fxe3 and concluded that Black must be doing well since the white king lacks a safe haven. But as the good Doctor found to his cost against Korchnoi in London 1984, after 14...f4 White has the improvement 15 ♙xc5!. Several moves for Black have been tried here, but the most promising must be 15...♙a6!?. Now the tactics get very complicated: 16 ♙a3 ♙ae8 (16...♙fe8 is probably a better try) 17 ♙ce4 ♙f6 18 ♙xd6 ♙a5 19 ♙c3! and Black's attack rapidly fizzled out. Of course, these positions are a tactical minefield for both sides and there is plenty of new territory to be explored. My hunch, though, is that with careful play White is doing well.

Safer than 14...f4 is 14...♙e8!?, e.g. 15 ♙f3 f4 16 ♙d2 ♙e7 17 0-0 ♙d7!?, when Black has some active pieces but objectively White should have an advantage.

Although 9...♙c7 is playable, current theory would suggest that Black is struggling. In any case, 9...♙c7 has been superseded by an even more dynamic idea...

9 ...

b5!?



A very bold move, offering both the d- and b-pawns, which was introduced by Belgian grandmaster Luc Winants in a memorable game against Timman in Brussels 1986. What should have been a brilliant victory for Winants turned to disaster after a series of time-trouble blunders gave Timman the point. Subsequent attempts to refute 9...b5 have failed and it has become a favourite among Benoni players seeking swashbuckling chess.

### 10 ♖xb5?

I am convinced that capturing this pawn is a mistake. The real test of 9...b5 has to be 10 ♠xd6, when the Timman-Winants game continued 10...♞b6 11 ♠e5 0-0 12 e3 c4 13 ♞d1 ♞d8 14 a3 ♖a6 and Black had active piece play and potential pressure on the d5 pawn. Although some Benoni players are very happy to play this variation, I have a deep suspicion that it is not entirely sound for Black. White should be able to keep the pawn and emerge with a

reasonable position. I have no analysis to back up this conclusion but remain wary of the whole line after 7...♠g7.

10 ... ♠xb5!

11 ♞xb5+ ♖bd7

Black is happy to shed material relying on the fact that White is so underdeveloped. Black's intends ...♞b8 and the b-pawn will fall. To prevent this White must keep on snatching material.

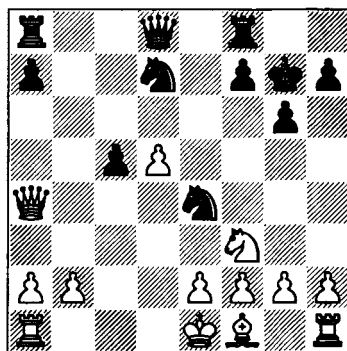
12 ♠xd6 ♖e4

13 ♠e5 0-0!

Black's priority is getting the king away so that the rooks and knights are free to enter the game. White's reply is forced.

14 ♠xg7 ♜xg7

15 ♞a4



The retreat of the queen, hitting the knight, is a logical response to the threat of ...♞b8. Now 15...♞df6 16 e3 ♞xd5 17 ♠c4 gives White time to unravel. However, Black is not prepared to relinquish the initiative quite so easily...

15 ... ♠b8!!

Black decides that it is worth a whole piece to prevent White from consolidating. With Black threatening moves like ...♠xb2 and ...♠b4, White is obliged to capture the knight.

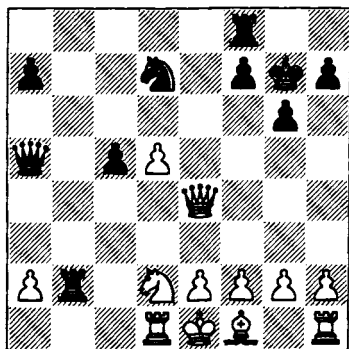
16 ♖xe4 ♖a5+

17 ♔d2

This offers better resistance than 17 ♔d1 ♠xb2 18 e3 ♔f6 19 ♖c4 ♔xd5!, when the king is so exposed that White has no hope of survival.

17 ... ♠xb2

18 ♔d1



18 ... ♔f6!

A more accurate move than 18...♠b8, which I played against Ivanchuk in Arnhem 1987. Although Black should not be worse even after this, the improvement 18...♔f6 seems to give him excellent winning chances.

19 ♖e5 ♠xa2

20 e3?

This seems to lose by force but the alternatives offer little more

joy; e.g. 20 f3 ♠e8 21 ♖g5 h6! and the queen must leave the defence of d5, allowing ...♔xd5 and ...♔e3 with a won game for Black.

20 ... ♠e8

21 ♖f4 ♠xd2

This finishes the game off nicely. White will be forced to relinquish his queen and with the king still in the centre of the board there is no hope of compensation.

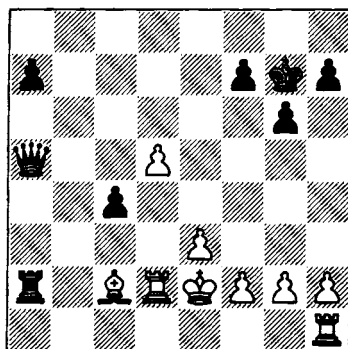
22 ♠xd2 ♔e4

23 ♖xe4 ♠xe4

24 ♔d3 ♠a4

25 ♔e2 c4

26 ♔c2 ♠a2



Now 27...c3 will win a piece.

27 ♠c1 ♖a3 28 ♔d1 ♖d6 29 g3 f5 30 e4 c3 31 ♠e2 ♖e5 32 ♔e1 ♖xe4 33 ♔d1 ♖h5 White resigned since the threat of ...♖f3 and ...♖h1 mate is devastating.

A game like this is an advert for 7...♔g7 and indeed one can have a lot of fun in these systems. I would still stress a word of caution though; 10 ♔xd6 may

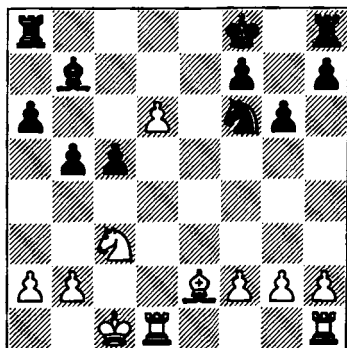


Castling queenside is rarely an option for White in the Benoni, but without the fianchetto bishop bearing down on b2 it is possible. White is hoping to exploit the strength of the passed d-pawn (indeed 12...0-0 would lose outright to 13 d6). White's attack appears rather artificial but I suppose that it's easy to be cool from where I am sitting.

12 ... ♖xe5  
13 ♖xe5 ♜d6  
14 ♖c6 ♜f8

A necessary precaution. White was threatening 15 ♖e1, which can now be met by 15...♗d8. Although White has a temporary initiative, the queen on e2 prevents the bishop and rook from entering the game and Black is ready to consolidate with ...♗f5 and ...♖e8.

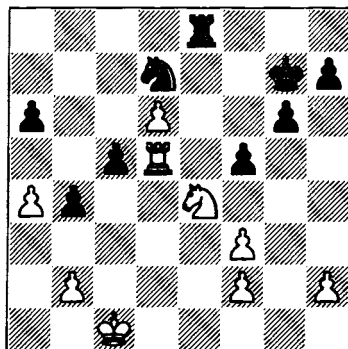
15 ♖xe7 ♜xe7  
16 d6 ♜xe2  
17 ♗xe2 ♗b7



At first sight the passed d-pawn looks dangerous, but Black's pieces are well placed to contain

it. In fact, this type of ending (passed d-pawn versus Black's three to two majority on the queenside) often crops up in the Benoni and usually favours Black. Unless the d-pawn can be promoted, it soon ceases to be a strategic asset and becomes a liability. Black should blockade the d-pawn and then seek to mobilise the queenside majority. In this example, Black's light-squared bishop also controls a powerful diagonal and White must suffer the doubling of his f-pawns to exchange it.

18 ♗f3 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♗g7 20 ♖he1 ♖he8 21 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 22 a4 b4 23 ♖e4 ♖d7! 24 ♗d5 f5

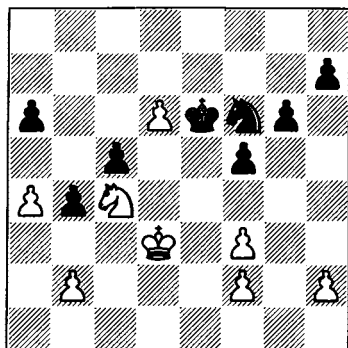


Now the knight must retreat since 25 ♖xc5 loses a piece after 25...♖c8.

25 ♖d2 ♖e1+ 26 ♗c2 ♗f6 27 ♖c4 ♖e2+ 28 ♗d2 ♖xd2+ 29 ♗xd2 ♗e6 30 ♗d3 ♖f6

Black's play has been exemplary; the d6 pawn has been blockaded and it can now be

rounded up with ...♗e8 followed by ...♗xd6.



31 ♖a5 ♗xd6 32 ♗c4 ♖d7 33 ♖b7+ ♗c6 34 ♖d8+ ♗c7 35 ♖f7 ♖b6+ 36 ♗xc5 ♖xa4+ 37 ♗xb4 ♖xb2 38 ♖g5 h6 39 ♖f7 ♖d3+ 40 ♗a5 ♖d7 41 ♗xa6 ♗e7 42 ♖xh6 ♗f6!

Now the knight is trapped (43 ♖g8+ ♗f7 44 ♖h6+ ♗g7).

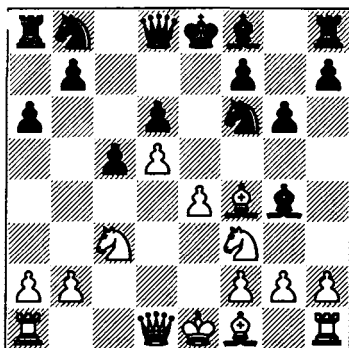
43 ♗b5 ♗g7 44 ♖xf5+ ♗xf5 45 ♗c4 ♖e5+ 46 ♖d5 ♖xf3 47 ♗e6 ♗g6 48 h3 ♗g5 White resigned

In the next game we look at the alternative 8...♗g4 plan for Black.

### Game 34 Tisdall – Co.Ionescu Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988

(1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 c5 4 d5 d6 5 ♖c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 ♖f4 a6 8 e4)

8 ... ♗g4



By deploying the bishop to g4 Black aims to take the sting out of the e4-e5 advance. White can now

continue with 9 ♖e2 or 9 a4 but the text move is an attempt to mix things up.

9 ♗a4+ ♖bd7  
10 ♖d2

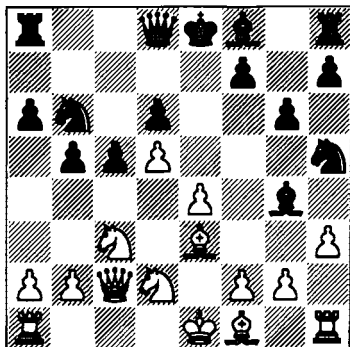
Having ducked out of the pin, Black's bishop is left pointing at thin air.

10 ... b5  
11 ♗c2

White has allowed the queen-side expansion in the hope that the bishop on g4 will become a problem; e.g. 11...♖b6 12 f3 ♖d7 and Black cannot play ...♗g7 because the d6 pawn will be en prise.

11 ... ♖h5!?  
12 ♖e3 ♖b6  
13 h3

Perhaps White should have challenged the queenside pawns immediately with 13 a4; e.g. 13...b4 14 ♖cb1 ♗g7 15 a5 ♖c8 16 ♖c4 and White has blockaded the queenside.



13 ... ♗d7

14 ♗e2

Now 14 a4 could have been met by 14...bxa4 with the following variation in mind: 15 ♖c4 ♖xc4 16 ♗xc4 ♗g7 17 ♖xa4 ♗b5! and Black has a comfortable position.

14 ... ♗g7

15 g4

Doubling the h-pawns was not particularly attractive for White: the black rook would gain access to the g-file and White's king would lack a safe haven.

15 ... ♖f6

16 g5 ♖h5

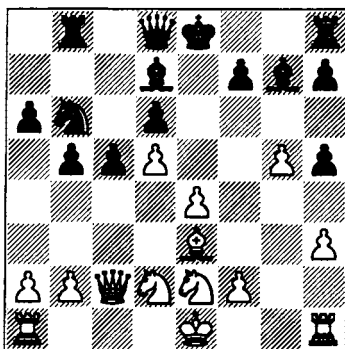
17 ♗xh5

With the pawn secured on g5, opening the g-file is less dangerous for White, although his king still lacks a secure flank.

17 ... gxf5

18 ♖e2

♗b8!



Even in double-edged positions, the general Modern Benoni principles still tend to apply. Black lines up for a dynamic attack along the b-file: the obvious idea is ...♖c4, causing havoc in White's defence.

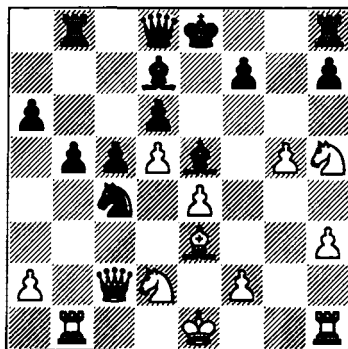
19 ♖g3

Faced with the loss of the h-pawn Black has no option but to continue on a tactical path.

19 ... ♖c4

20 ♖xh5 ♗xb2

21 ♗b1 ♗e5



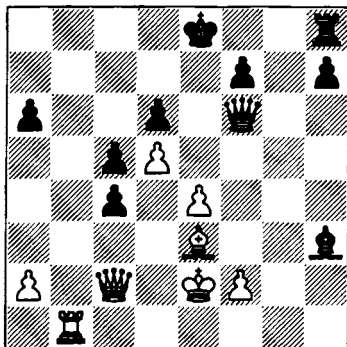


With the knight ready to hop into f6, it is important to preserve the dark-squared bishop. Black is ready to play ...♖xe3 and ...♜xg5.

- 22 ♖xc4      bxc4  
 23 ♜e2      ♖xb1  
 24 ♖xb1      ♠xh3

This is a pawn worth grabbing since Black now has the threat of ...♠g4+. Note also that the black king is actually quite safe in the centre, and he still has the option of castling if things get too hot!

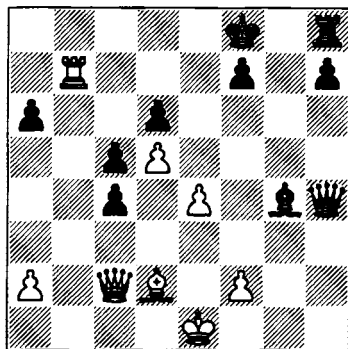
- 25 ♖f6+      ♠xf6  
 26 gxf6      ♜xf6!



- 27 ♖b8+      ♜e7  
 28 ♖b7+      ♜f8  
 29 ♠d2?!      ♠g4+

It would have been better to capture the pawn with 29 ♜xc4; now Black has a powerful sequence.

- 29 ...      ♠g4+  
 30 ♜e1      ♜h4!



- 31 ♠c3      f6  
 32 e5?

The best way to fight was 32 ♜a4!, as now White is busted.

- 32 ...      ♜h1+  
 33 ♜d2      ♜xd5+  
 34 ♜c1      ♜xb7

White resigned

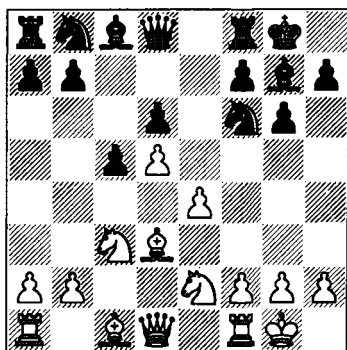
The conclusion of the chapter is that Black should certainly be able to meet the 7 ♠f4 system with 7...a6. The controversial issue is whether 7...♠g7 is a good alternative. Because this system is rarely played nowadays we lack the benefit of recent examples. My advice would be to rely on 7...a6 as your main defence, but reserve 7...♠g7 if you want to see fireworks. Anyway, you are unlikely to have to face an early ♠f4 too often. Unless, of course, the system makes a sudden comeback.

# 8 System with e4, ♖d3 and ♗ge2

This is another fashionable system for White. Every so often it enjoys a burst of activity and then seems to lose favour. It can be quite dangerous for Black to meet, especially if White is well versed in the attacking themes of the position.

The system is characterised by the position after:

- |        |      |
|--------|------|
| 1 d4   | ♟f6  |
| 2 c4   | c5   |
| 3 d5   | e6   |
| 4 ♖c3  | exd5 |
| 5 cxd5 | d6   |
| 6 e4   | g6   |
| 7 ♖d3  | ♙g7  |
| 8 ♗ge2 | O-O  |
| 9 O-O  |      |



Here we have the basic starting position of the system. At first sight White's set-up looks slightly artificial. The knight on e2 would appear to be misplaced: it does

not control the central square e5, nor does it have the option of deploying to c4. However, White has a clear plan in mind: ♗e2-g3, f2-f4 and ultimately e4-e5. Preparatory moves like ♖h1 and h3 may have to be played, since Black often has tricks against the white king, but if White is allowed to carry out his plan unhindered Black will be in deep trouble.

So what will Black be doing while the central pawns come storming down? Of course, playing for rapid queenside expansion to distract White's central advance is fundamental. As usual, White will try to restrain ...b7-b5, but at some point he may decide to abandon the queenside to pursue a direct attack on the centre or kingside. Consequently the middlegame tends to be very tense, with both sides looking to seize their chance on their respective flanks.

Black has a wide number of ninth move alternatives: 9...♖a6, 9...a6, 9...b6, 9...♞e8, 9...♗bd7 and 9...♗g4. Each of these gives rise to a multitude of sub-variations and to be honest, everything can get rather confusing. Since I have only two games in which to consider this system, I propose to consider only one of the above: 9...♖a6. My justification for this

is that e4,  $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d3}$  and  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{ge2}$  is not a common system and it is more practical to have one line against

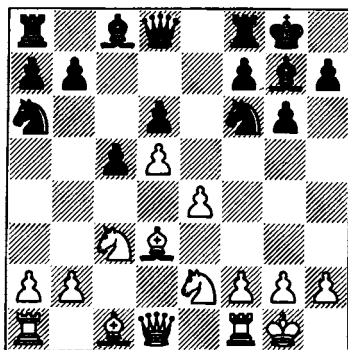
it that you know well, rather than half a dozen that you know only vaguely.

## Game 35

### Knaak – Anastasian

#### Erevan 1988

(1  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{d4}$   $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{f6}$  2  $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c4}$   $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{c5}$  3  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{d5}$   $\text{\textcircled{g}}\text{g6}$  4  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{c3}$   
 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{g7}$  5  $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e4}$   $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{d6}$  6  $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d3}$  0-0 7  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{ge2}$   $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e6}$   
 8 0-0  $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{xd5}$  9  $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xd5}$ )  
 9 ...  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{a6}$



Since we know that White's plan will be f2-f4 and e4-e5, one might expect the knight to be employed on d7, where it would hold the important e5 square. However, White's plan is not to control the e5 square; after e4-e5, ...d6xe5 White will not recapture but will advance f4-f5, sacrificing a pawn for a kingside attack. Then either the knight on g3 or c3 will hop into the blockading square e4. If Black deploys the knight to c7 then it restrains e4-e5 by exerting pressure on the d5 pawn.

10  $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{h3}$

This modest move is useful in this system since Black often has tactics involving ... $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{g4}$  and a check along the g1-a7 diagonal. The main alternative is 10  $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{g5}$ , which we consider in the next game. Another way to play is 10 f3, an old idea of Tony Miles', against which Black should just continue sensibly with ... $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{c7}$ , ... $\text{\textcircled{b}}\text{b8}$  and ... $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d7}$ . 10 f3 is very solid but it delays White's primary plan – central expansion.

10 ...  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{c7}$

Black can also play immediately 10... $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d7}$ ; e.g. 11  $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{g3}$   $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e8}$  12  $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e1}$   $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{c7}$  and now 13  $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{f4}$ ! gives White the initiative. My feeling is that playing ... $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d7}$  too quickly could lead to difficulties after  $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{f4}$ , when the d6 pawn is awkward to defend. Moreover, there is no sense in rushing ... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e8}$  in these variations; the e4 pawn is over-protected and sometimes the rook is needed on f8 to defend the f7 pawn when the position opens up. It seems better to concentrate on the basic plan of ... $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{c7}$  and ... $\text{\textcircled{b}}\text{b8}$ .

11  $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{a4}$

This move cannot be delayed for long; e.g. 11 ♕g3 ♜b8 12 a4 a6!. Black need not fear a4-a5 in this position, since the semi-open b-file will be adequate compensation for the isolated a6 pawn; e.g. 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 ♜xb6 15 ♖a4 ♜b8 16 ♖d2 ♖b5 and Black is already doing fine. One advantage of having the knight on c7 is that it is ready to hop into b5 after the exchange of pawns on b6. If the knight is captured on b5 then Black restores the harmony of his pawns with ...axb5; whilst on b5 it also controls the important d4 square.

11 ... a6

Perhaps 11...♜b8 was more accurate. The alternative is 11...b6 but this seems rather slow; e.g. 12 ♖g5 h6 13 ♖h4 ♖a6 14 f4 and White's central expansion seems to be faster than Black's queen-side play.

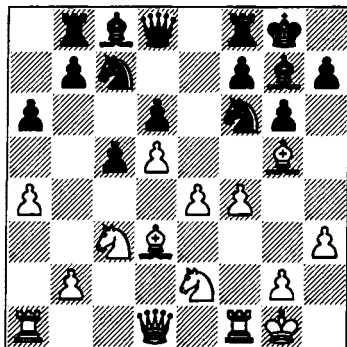
12 ♖g5!

This is White's most dangerous continuation, giving the f2-f4, e4-e5 plan more bite.

12 ... ♜b8

13 f4 (D)

A razor-sharp position in which White threatens to win the house with e4-e5. Here my inclination would be to play 13...♜e8. Admittedly White has some dangerous options; e.g. 14 e5 dxe5 15 f5. The pin on the f6 knight looks vicious, but Black's position is very resilient. Besides, Black already has one pawn and the d-pawn looks



sure to fall. Black can also counterattack with 15...b5! (in some variations the rook can come to b6 to defend the f6 knight). Okay, this position is not for the faint-hearted, and Black might even be busted, but I've always managed to survive – touch wood.

Black's next move seems to leave him in grave danger and if 13...♜e8 is too risky then Black needs some new ideas in this critical position. Perhaps immediately 13...h6 and after 14 ♖h4 ♜e8!?, which is presumably what Black was angling for in the game. Another interesting idea is 13...♜d7; it makes sense for the queen to remain on the d-file, since Black wants to answer the e4-e5 thrust with ...♕fxd5. Moreover, the queen supports the ...b7-b5 thrust after which the bishop may deploy on b7.

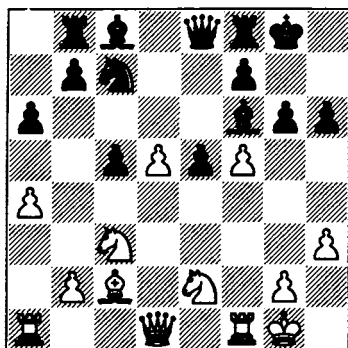
13 ... ♜e8?!

14 ♖c2!

Suddenly Black's position is critical. The natural move is 14...b5 but this fails to 15 e5! dxe5

16 fxe5 ♜xe5 17 ♖f4 winning a piece. The position of the queen on e8 cramps Black's position.

14 ... h6  
15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6  
16 e5 dxe5  
17 f5

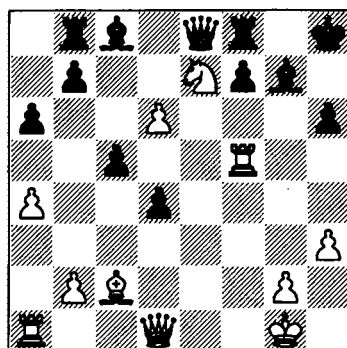


A familiar scheme from White. The extra pawn is little compensation for Black's ruptured kingside; the white pawn on e5 blocks the bishop and compromises Black's hopes for dynamic counterplay; and White can establish an almost impregnable knight on e4. Black's only hope in such positions is to launch a rapid attack on the d5 pawn with ...♖b7 and ...♞d8, but here Black's counter-attack will be too slow.

17 ... gxf5

A sorry move to have to play but the alternative, 17...g5 18 d6 ♖a8 19 ♗e4, was even less appealing.

18 d6! ♗e6  
19 ♗d5 ♖g7  
20 ♞xf5 ♗d4  
21 ♗xd4 exd4  
22 ♗e7+ ♖h8



23 ♞f6!!

**Black resigned**

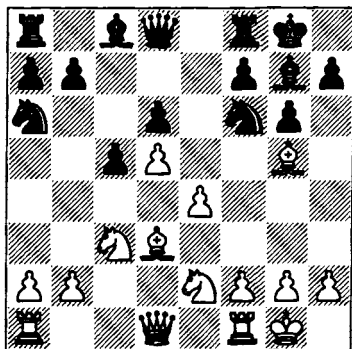
White finds a brilliant finish. After 23...♖xf6 24 ♜d3 and 25 ♜h7 mate is unavoidable.

An impressive game by White, and a good advertisement for this system. Still, the critical questions rest on Black's 13th move alternatives.

### Game 36

H.Olafsson – Gelfand  
New York Open 1989

(1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♖g7 4 e4 0-0 exd5 9 cxd5 ♗a6)  
d6 5 ♖d3 0-0 6 ♗ge2 c5 7 d5 e6 8 10 ♖g5



White goes directly for the plan of g5, f2-f4 and e4-e5 without spending a move on h2-h3. Note that Black could now lay a trap here with 10...e8: if White pushes 11 f4 then 11...c4! 12 c2 b6+ and 13...g4 terrorising the e3 and f2 squares. The most natural continuation after 10...e8 is 11 d2.

10 ... h6

This poses the question to the white bishop. If 11 h4 Black could keep up the chase with 11...g5 12 g3 h5 13 d2 c7, and I can see no reason why White should be better. Another point behind the move h2-h3 is that the bishop has the h2 square to retreat to.

11 f4 g4!?

Dynamic, but 11...c7 is also fine for Black. If White continues simply with 12 f3 then Black has the option of livening things up with 12...g5 13 e3 b5!? and if White grabs the b-pawn then the b2 pawn will be lost: 14 xxb5 xxb5 15 xxb5 b8 16 a4 a6.

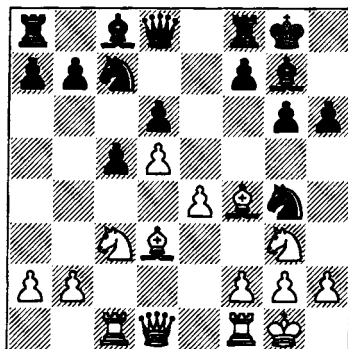
12 c1

I can't say that I really understand this move but does White have a good alternative?

12 ... c7

Black continues with the plan; ...b8 will follow and clearly Black's queenside expansion is faster than White's central thrust. The strength of ...g4 is that it delays White's central play, whilst 13 h3 could be met by 13...e5 and it will take White some time to arrange the f4 push.

13 g3?!



13 ... xh2!

A good decision. Although White obtains two central pawns Black's initiative more than compensates.

14 xd6 xd6

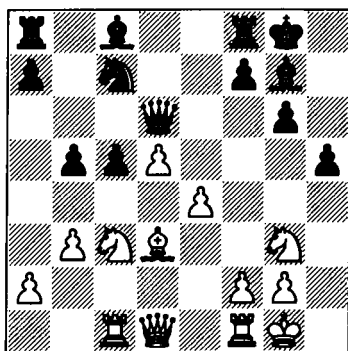
15 xh2 b5!

Causing disruption in White's camp. Capturing the pawn allows Black's rook rapid access to the game with ...b8. The main weakness of White's position is the dark squares.

16 b3 h5

17 ♖g1

The pawn thrust 17 f4 would have left White with further weaknesses; e.g. 17...♗g4 18 ♖e1 ♜fe8! and there is too much strain on White's centre.



17 ... ♜b8

18 ♘ge2 f5!

Causing White's central pawns even more trouble, as 19 exf5 allows the bishop to enter the game by 19...♗xf5. Besides, Black also has ideas of storming the kingside with 19...f4.

19 f4 c4

20 bxc4 bxc4

21 ♠c2

Of course, 21 ♠xc4 would lose a piece to 21...♖c5+.

21 ... ♜xe4

22 ♠xe4 ♠f5

Black's play has been very crisp. The dark-squared bishop remains a monster and White's pawns have become liabilities, restricting the pair of knights.

23 ♖a4 ♠xe4

24 ♘xe4 ♖b6+

25 ♖h2 ♘xd5

26 ♖xc4 ♖b5

With such a positional advantage, Black is happy to exchange queens. White's knights have no target to aim at, whereas both the f4 and a2 pawns are weak.

27 ♘d6 ♖xc4

28 ♘xc4 ♜be8

29 ♜c2 ♜e4

30 ♘d6 ♜e6

31 ♘c4 ♜c8

32 ♜b1 ♘b6!

White resigned since he cannot avoid losing a piece.

This concludes the study of the e4, ♠d3 and ♘ge2 system. You will have seen that play quickly becomes highly tactical and playing the Black side demands steady nerves. If I had to offer practical advice in these systems it would be: *believe in your position*. Yes, White does have some dangerous attacking ideas, but you will compromise your chances if you let this fact depress you. Keep active, and be prepared to return material (or sacrifice it) to seize the initiative. Your king will be a target, but remember your opponent's king is also vulnerable, especially if it has remained on g1. Above all, bear in mind that the faster you launch your counterattack on the queenside, the less time he will have to prepare his central thrust.

This chapter consists of miscellaneous systems in the Modern Benoni. Although none of these are critical variations, each has certain tricks which the Black player must avoid. In addition, many Benoni players are preoccupied with the critical main lines, so these offbeat systems can lull the Black player into a false sense of security, allowing White to develop a dangerous position simply through inaccuracies by his opponent.

The ♖g5 and e2-e3 system used by Karpov is the positional approach. White does not play e2-e4 but the modest e2-e3, avoiding a possible weak pawn on e4 and thereby removing one of the targets of Black's counterplay. Instead, White builds up more slowly, and although this would normally allow Black to achieve easy equality, in the sample game

he is hampered by the unfortunate placement of his queen.

Finegold-Kinsman features an interesting new idea pioneered by Psakhis to avoid the Modern Classical variation. Black sacrifices a pawn in return for a big lead in development and good counterplay on the dark squares.

Gligoric's early ♖b5+ is a dangerous idea though Fedorowicz shows that Black has many resources. Still, the Black player must be careful as it seems that White is very close to achieving a dominating position.

In the final game White plays the almost extinct 'Knight's Tour' variation. This underrated system involves an immediate attempt to win the vulnerable d6 pawn. Practical play, however, has shown that with accurate play Black can create enough counterplay.

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### Game 37

### Karpov – de Firmian

### Blel 1990

(1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5  
exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6)

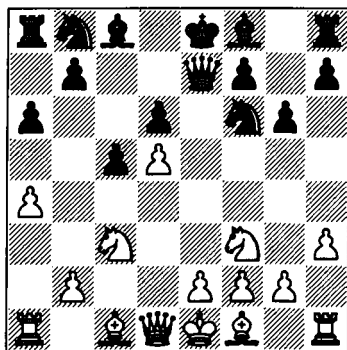
7 h3 a6

8 a4 ♖e7!?

The Modern Classical variation has been quite successful

for White, so de Firmian stops White from playing this system with an unusual queen move. However, White cleverly employs another system in which the queen is not usually placed on e7.





9 ♖g5! ♜bd7  
10 e3

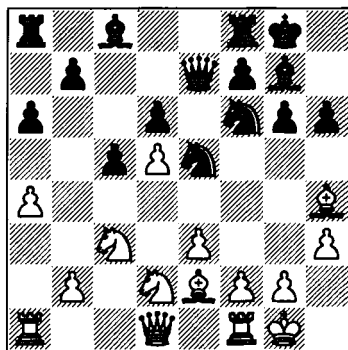
We have now arrived at the main line of the ♖g5 and e3 variations with the difference that the moves ...♜e7 and h3 have been played. The question is, which of these moves is more useful? Karpov demonstrates that he can incorporate h2-h3 into his plans whereas Black has difficulty in justifying the unusual position of his queen.

10 ... ♖g7  
11 ♖e2 0-0  
12 0-0 h6  
13 ♖h4 ♜e5  
14 ♜d2! (D)

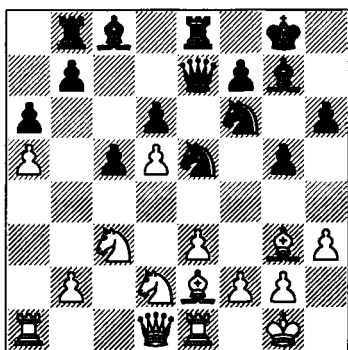
White would have no advantage after 14 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 15 ♖g3 ♜e7. This move virtually forces Black to play ...g6-g5.

14 ... g5  
15 ♖g3 ♜e8?!

The wrong rook, as pointed out by Karpov in *Informator 50*. He gives 15...♖f5 16 a5 ♜ae8 as a better try for Black, with an unclear position.



16 ♜e1 ♜b8  
17 a5?!



There is no mention of the more natural 17 ♜c2!, preventing ...♖f5, in Karpov's notes. If 17...b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xb5! (19 ♜xb5 ♜xd5 and Black is doing well) and White is simply a pawn up.

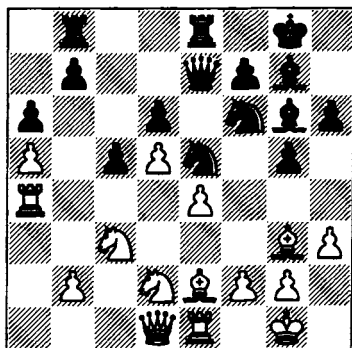
17 ... ♖f5

Not 17...♜h7? 18 f4 ♜g6 18 ♜c4 with a clear advantage to White, according to Karpov.

18 e4 ♖g6

19 ♜a4! (D)

A brilliant concept. The rook defends the e4 pawn and at the



same time restrains ...b5 by potential pressure against a6.

19 ... ♖fd7

20 ♖c2

White's plan is revealed. Over-protect e4, then play ♖d2-f1-e3 followed by an invasion of the weak f5 square.

20 ... ♜bc8

21 b3!

Stopping any ...c5-c4 followed by ...♗c5 tricks.

21 ... ♜f8

Black has the right idea. He must play ...f7-f5 to rid himself of the weakness on f5. However, a better move would have been 21...♜f8! with the same ideas as in the game.

22 ♖f1 f5

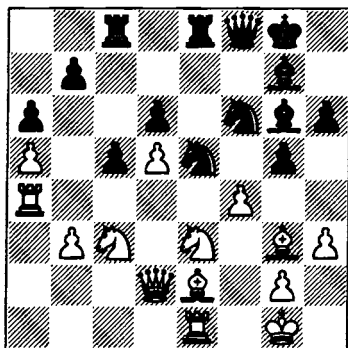
23 exf5 ♙xf5

24 ♜d2 ♖f6

25 ♖e3 ♙g6

26 f4! (D)

Black must not be allowed to consolidate his position and 'cover up' the f5 square. Note the crucial role of the rook on a4. Not only would f2-f4 be impossible



without the influence of this rook, but it also controls the e4 square, stopping any Black counterplay with ...♗f6-e4. 26 f4! is again aimed at occupation of the f5 square by a knight. White also maintains the possibility of playing f4-f5!, completely hemming the bishop on g6 out of the game.

26 ... ♖f7

26...gxf4 27 ♜xf4 would be no better as a knight would arrive on f5.

27 ♙f2

Forcing Black to capture on f4. The plan of f5 followed by g4 is far too strong.

27 ... gxf4

28 ♜xf4 ♜e7

29 ♖f5 ♙xf5

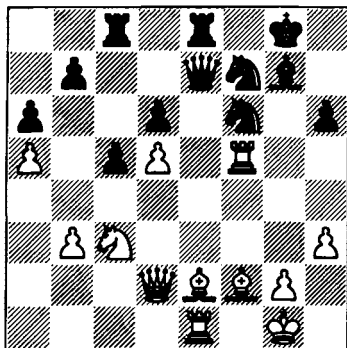
30 ♜xf5 (D)

The diagram overleaf is a classic example of the perfect positional treatment of the Modern Benoni by White.

30 ... ♜c7

31 ♜f4 ♖h7

Alternatively, 31...♖g5? fails to 32 ♜xf6 ♜f8 33 ♖e4! or 31...♜xa5



32  $\text{xf6}$   $\text{g5}$  33  $\text{c1!}$  (analysis by Karpov).

32  $\text{e4}$   $\text{e5}$

33  $\text{f1}$   $\text{f8}$

34  $\text{e1!}$   $\text{b5}$

34... $\text{xf5?!}$  fails to 35  $\text{xf5}$   $\text{e8}$

36  $\text{h5}$   $\text{e7}$  37  $\text{h4}$   $\text{d7}$  38  $\text{e6+}$  with mate or heavy material loss, whilst 34... $\text{d8}$  35  $\text{c3!}$  with the idea of  $\text{xd6}$  is also strong for White.

35  $\text{axb6}$   $\text{xb6}$

36  $\text{h1}$   $\text{h8}$

37  $\text{g3}$   $\text{xf5}$

38  $\text{xf5}$   $\text{g8}$

39  $\text{e3}$   $\text{a5?}$

A time-pressure blunder. Karpov gives 39... $\text{f8}$  40  $\text{xf8+}$   $\text{xf8}$  41  $\text{b4}$   $\text{fd7}$  as best, though White still retains a clear edge.

40  $\text{g3}$   $\text{b8}$  41  $\text{xd6}$   $\text{xd6}$  42  $\text{xe5}$   $\text{f8}$  43  $\text{e6}$  Black resigned

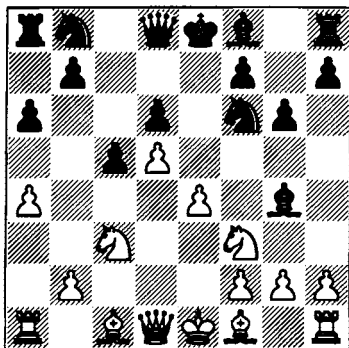
Black's position has collapsed.

### Game 38 Finegold – Kinsman Groningen Open 1993

(1  $\text{d4}$   $\text{f6}$  2  $\text{c4}$   $\text{c5}$  3  $\text{d5}$   $\text{e6}$  4  $\text{c3}$   $\text{exd5}$  5  $\text{cxd5}$   $\text{d6}$  6  $\text{e4}$   $\text{g6}$  7  $\text{f3}$ )

7 ...  $\text{a6}$

8  $\text{a4}$   $\text{g4!?}$



Black plays an early ... $\text{g4}$  before White can play  $\text{h2-h3}$ , thereby dodging the fashionable Modern Classical variation. The drawback of 8... $\text{g4}$  is the weakening of the  $\text{b7}$  pawn and much of the debate over the validity of the system lies in whether Black has enough compensation for the ensuing pawn sacrifice.

9  $\text{b3}$

9  $\text{e2}$   $\text{xf3}$  10  $\text{xf3}$   $\text{bd7}$  transposes to the ... $\text{g4}$  line of the Classical variation which was considered in Chapter 3.

9 ...  $\text{xf3}$

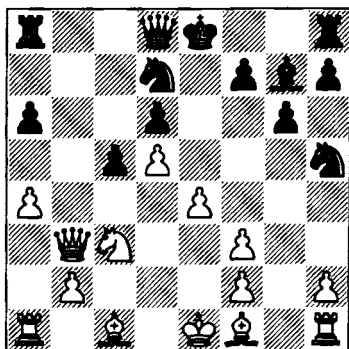
10  $\text{xb7}$   $\text{bd7}$

11 gxf3      ♖g7

12 ♖b3

Instead 12 ♖c6 ♖b8 13 ♖xa6 0-0 14 ♖b7 ♘e5 15 ♖xb8 ♘xf3+ 16 ♘f1 ♖fb8 17 ♖e2 ♘d4 was Douven-Psakhis, Groningen Open 1993 (one round before the text game). Although Black is a pawn down, the knight on d4 provides ample compensation.

12 ...      ♘h5!



An all-purpose move which in one stroke activates the bishop on g7 and the queen on d8, and guards the important f4 square. It is clear from the diagram that Black has excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Although White also has the two bishops, the weaknesses in his position, especially on f4, enhance the effects of Black's knights. In addition, White has doubled f-pawns and is a long way from being fully developed.

13 ♖d1      ♖e5?!

Overprotection of the f4 square to prevent White from playing

f3-f4 is crucial. However, a better method of achieving this objective would be to first play 13... ♖h4! and only then decide whether ...♖e5 is necessary.

14 ♖h3      0-0

15 ♖h6      ♖e8

16 ♖d2      ♘b6

17 ♖g4      ♘f6

18 h3      ♘xg4!?

Black somewhat repairs White's pawn structure, but retains control over the weakness on f4. The removal of the light-squared bishop has other consequences for White's position in that the light squares can become a target.

19 hxg4      ♖f6

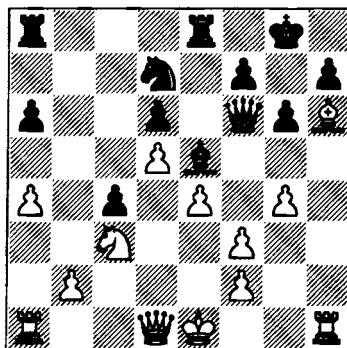
20 ♖d3      c4!

Gaining a tempo and highlighting the potential weaknesses on d3 and b3.

21 ♖d1?!

Better was 21 ♖e3 ♖d4 22 ♖g5 ♖e5 23 ♖f4 ♖f6 24 ♖g5 with a repetition (perhaps Black should try 22... ♖h8!?).

21 ...      ♘d7!

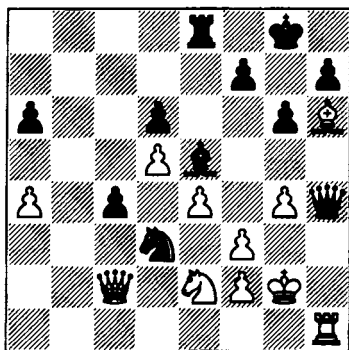


A typical Benoni switch. After threatening to infiltrate via c4, the knight temporarily retreats to d7 to go via c5 to d3.

22 ♖c1 ♗c5  
23 ♜f1 ♗d3  
24 ♖c2 ♖ab8

Of course 24...♗xb2 25 ♖xb2 ♗xc3 26 ♖c2 ♖ac8 was also good for Black. The text is a typical example of the player with the initiative maintaining the tension rather than playing a forced sequence.

25 ♜g2 ♖xb2  
26 ♗e2 ♖xc2  
27 ♜xc2 ♜h4!!



The dual threats of ...♜xf2+ and ...♜xh6 force the exchange of

queens, after which Black's passed c-pawn is the main factor.

28 ♖xh4 ♗e1+  
29 ♜f1 ♗xc2  
30 ♖h1 c3  
31 ♜g2 ♗b4  
32 f4 ♖h8  
33 ♜f3 c2  
34 ♗c1 f5!

A successful attempt to keep the white bishop on h6 out of the game.

35 gxf5 gxf5  
36 e5

After 36 exf5 ♖b2, the bishop on h6 will not be able control the vital c1 square. However, White's position is quite hopeless and this pawn sacrifice, liberating the h6 bishop, does not save the game.

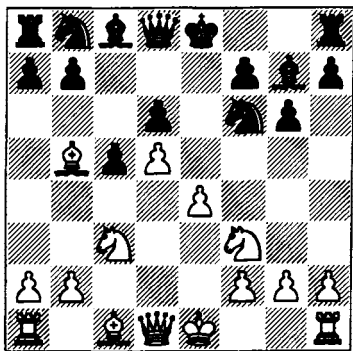
36...dxe5 37 fxe5 ♖xe5 38 ♖h4 a5 39 ♖d2 ♖b2 40 ♖c4 ♖xc1 41 ♖xc1 ♗d3 42 ♖c3 ♗xc1 43 ♖xc2 ♗d3 44 ♖c3 ♗b4 45 ♖c5 ♖d8 46 ♖xa5 ♗xd5 47 ♖b5 ♜f7 48 a5 ♜e6 49 a6 ♖a8 50 ♖b7 ♖xa6 51 ♖xh7 ♖a3+ 52 ♜g2 ♜e5 53 ♖b7 ♜e4 54 ♖f7 ♖a2 55 ♖f8 ♜f4 56 ♜g1 ♗c3 57 ♖h8 ♗e4 58 ♖h4+ ♜f3 59 ♖h5 ♜g4 60 ♖h8 ♖xf2 61 ♖e8 ♜f3 62 ♖e5 ♖g2+ White resigned

### Game 39 Gligorić – Fedorowicz New York Open 1988

(1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♗c3 g6 7 e4 ♖g7)

8 ♖b5+!?

The Benoni pawn structure is one of the most dynamic opening



set-ups. However, one of its weaknesses is that White always has the idea of bursting through the centre with a timely e4-e5. 8  $\text{Qb5+!}$ ? is an innovative method of gaining time. The idea is to castle quickly, attack d6 and e5 with  $\text{Qf4}$ , and then play e4-e5 before Black can settle into the position.

8 ...  $\text{Qbd7}$

The alternative 8... $\text{Qd7?!}$  is answered by 9  $\text{Qe2!}$  when Black's bishop on d7 is misplaced (an idea 'stolen' from the Flick-Knife Attack against the Benoni). After 1 d4  $\text{Qf6}$  2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4  $\text{Qc3}$  exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4  $\text{Qg7}$  8  $\text{Qb5+}$ , 8... $\text{Qd7?!}$  is met with 9 e5! with advantage to White.

9  $\text{Qf4}$   $\text{Qe7}$

A better square for the queen than c7. On c7, Black would run into problems when White plays a future  $\text{Nc1}$  and b2-b4 with strong pressure against the d6-c5 pawn mass.

10 0-0 0-0

11  $\text{Nc1}$   $\text{Qg4!}$

One of the few positions in

which White has the luxury of not bothering to stem Black's queenside play with a2-a4. If instead 11...a6 12  $\text{Qf1}$  b5?! 13 e5!, when White has achieved his main objective. Black rightly decides to cover the all-important e5 square before embarking on any queenside play.

12  $\text{Qg5}$

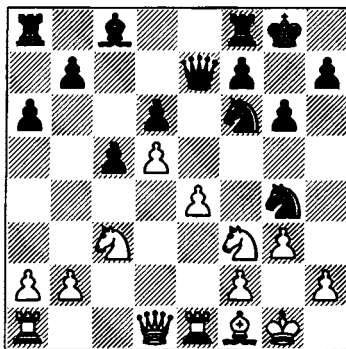
Probably stronger than 12  $\text{Qf1}$   $\text{Qde5}$  13  $\text{Qxe5}$   $\text{Qxe5}$  14  $\text{Wd2}$  a6 15  $\text{Qg5}$  f6 16  $\text{Qh4}$  g5 17  $\text{Qg3}$  b5 18 a4 b4 19  $\text{Qd1}$  f5 20 exf5  $\text{Qxf5}$ , as in Gligorić-D.Gurevich, New York Open 1988, when Black had good piece play in compensation for his weaknesses on the kingside.

12 ...  $\text{Qf6}$

13  $\text{Qxf6}$   $\text{Qdxf6}$

14  $\text{Qf1}$  a6

15 g3!?



White has a slight advantage though Black has managed to steer clear of the tricks and has established a typical Benoni position. 15 a4 is the more normal response to ...a7-a6 but White

continues to pin his hopes on a central breakthrough.

15 ... b5  
16 e5!? dxe5

Not 16...dxe5? 17 d6 ♖e8 (or 17...♗e6 18 h3 d6 19 dxe5 with advantage to White) 18 d5! dxd5 19 ♗xd5 and White has a dominating position.

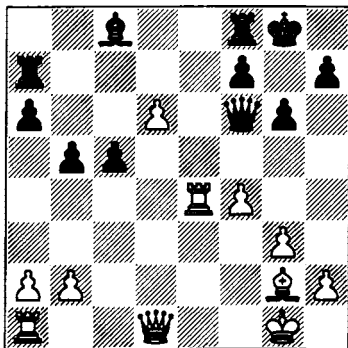
17 dxe5 dxe5  
18 d6 ♗e6

An important move, covering d5. 18...♗e8? would run into 19 d5 with the same consequences as in the previous note.

19 g2 a7  
20 f4 e4

What else? 20...b4 21 d5! is extremely uncomfortable and the alternative 20...d4 is met by the simple 21 h3.

21 dxe4 dxe4  
22 ex4 wf6



The critical position. White is in fact a few consolidating moves short of a winning position. As it stands, however, White's d-pawn cannot be overprotected quickly

enough and Black's pieces are ideally placed for rounding up the d-pawn. Black is now threatening the simple ...a7-d7, winning the passed d-pawn.

23 e5

23 ♗d2 d8! 24 d1 a7 wins the d-pawn for nothing.

23 ... d7

Black would be pushing his luck after 23...c4? 24 c6! when 24...d7 would be met by 25 ♗d4! netting the exchange. As I said earlier, White is a few consolidating moves away from an overwhelming position and any loss of time on Black's part could be disastrous.

24 d5 dxd6

Instead 24...dxd6 25 ♗xc5 d2 26 a1, with the threat of e4-e8, is risky for Black.

25 dxd6 dxd6  
26 xc5 d2  
27 b4 e6  
28 a3 fd8

White has a winning bishop ending thanks to his pawns being on different coloured squares to his bishop. However, with the rooks still on the board, Black has the advantage! If the f4 pawn were on f2, White would still have some chances of making something out of this endgame, but with the pawn on f4, the second rank is extremely weak and vulnerable to infiltration by the black rooks.

29 e1 h5 30 f3 b2 31 c3 h4 32 gxh4 d2 33 h5 gxh5 34

**h4**  $\text{Ed4}$  35  $\text{Exh5}$   $\text{Exf4}$  36  $\text{Eg3+}$   
 $\text{xf8}$  37  $\text{Eg2}$   $\text{Exg2+}$  38  $\text{xfg2}$   
 $\text{Exh4}$  39  $\text{Ef3}$

Now that a pair of rooks have been exchanged, the immediate threat to White's king is over and a draw is inevitable.

39... $\text{Ec4}$  40  $\text{Eb7}$   $\text{Ec8}$  41  $\text{Ed5}$   
 $\text{Ed4}$  42  $\text{Ef3}$   $\text{Ee6}$  43  $\text{Ed1}$   $\text{Exd1}$  44  
 $\text{Exd1}$   $\text{ce7}$  45  $\text{cf3}$   $\text{cd6}$  46  $\text{ce4}$   
 $\text{Ed7}$  47  $\text{Eb3}$   $\text{f6}$  48  $\text{cd4}$   $\text{Ee6}$  49  
 $\text{Ed1}$   $\text{cc6}$  50  $\text{Ef3+}$   $\text{cb6}$  51  $\text{Ee4}$   
 $\text{a5}$  52  $\text{Ef3}$   $\text{axb4}$  53  $\text{axb4}$   $\text{cc7}$  54  
 $\text{Ee2}$   $\text{Ec4}$  Draw agreed

## Game 40

### Yewdokimov – Suba

#### Stiges Open 1992

(1  $\text{d4}$   $\text{cf6}$  2  $\text{c4}$   $\text{e6}$  3  $\text{cf3}$   $\text{c5}$  4  $\text{d5}$   
 $\text{d6}$  5  $\text{cf3}$   $\text{exd5}$  6  $\text{cxd5}$   $\text{g6}$ )

7  $\text{cf2}$   $\text{Ag7}$

8  $\text{cf4}$

An over-elaborate manoeuvre that is rarely seen nowadays in grandmaster chess. White exerts pressure on the d6 pawn at the earliest possible opportunity and can either follow-up with  $\text{Ef4}$  or the game continuation.

It should also be noted that 7  $\text{cf2}$  is sometimes played with the idea of transposing into the Classical variation with  $\text{e2-e4}$ , as with this move order, White does not allow Black to play the ... $\text{Ag4}$  systems.

8 ... 0-0

9  $\text{Ag5}$

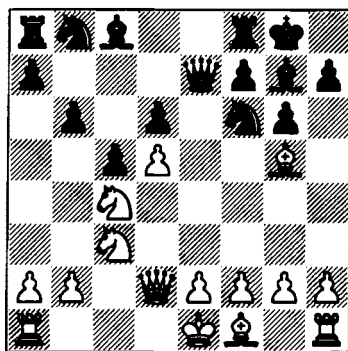
White attempts to provoke ... $\text{h7-h6}$ , which he will meet with  $\text{Ef4}$  and then gain a tempo on the h6 pawn with  $\text{Wd2}$  or  $\text{Wc1}$ . After 9  $\text{Ef4}$   $\text{cf8}$  10  $\text{Wd2}$   $\text{Exc3}$  is a risky possibility played by both Tal and Korchnoi.

9 ...  $\text{We7}$

10  $\text{Wd2}$

Perhaps it is too late to turn back by playing a safer option: 10  $\text{e3}$   $\text{cfbd7!}$  (not 10... $\text{b6}$  11  $\text{a4}$   $\text{Ea6}$  12  $\text{Ec1!}$ ) 11  $\text{a4?!}$  (better was 11  $\text{cfb5}$   $\text{a6}$  12  $\text{cfbxd6}$   $\text{b5}$  with unclear play) 11... $\text{cf5!}$  12  $\text{cf3}$   $\text{h6}$  13  $\text{Ef4}$   $\text{g5}$  14  $\text{Ag3}$   $\text{cf7}$ , as in Dlugy-Klinger, World Junior Ch., Sharjah 1985, when Black has easily equalised and may even hold a slight advantage.

10 ...  $\text{b6}$

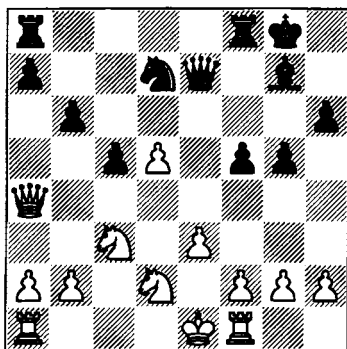


Also possible was 10... $\text{cfbd7}$  11  $\text{Wf4}$   $\text{h6}$  12  $\text{Exh6}$   $\text{Exh6}$  13  $\text{Wxh6}$



♖e5 14 e3 ♗f5 with compensation for the pawn, as in Ftačnik-Cramling, Biel 1984.

- |         |      |
|---------|------|
| 11 ♖f4  | ♗a6  |
| 12 ♜xd6 | h6   |
| 13 ♗xf6 | ♗xf6 |
| 14 ♜de4 | ♗g7  |
| 15 e3   | f5   |
| 16 ♜d2  | g5   |
| 17 ♖a4  | ♗xf1 |
| 18 ♖xf1 | ♜d7  |



Clearly Black has some compensation for the sacrificed pawn in the shape of his powerful dark-squared bishop. If the white king were on g1, Black's compensation would be minimal and White's passed d-pawn would probably decide the game. However, the white king can only castle long and Black's dark-squared bishop will constantly harass White on the a1-h8 diagonal.

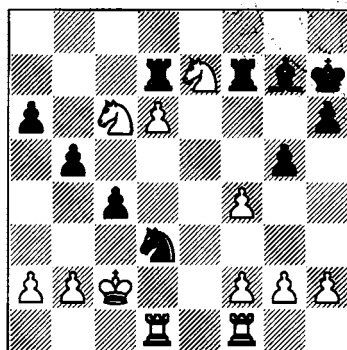
19 0-0-0 ♗a6!

Preparing the queenside attack, but this is also a good positional move as Black needs some control over the light squares.

- |          |      |
|----------|------|
| 20 d6    | ♖f7  |
| 21 ♖c4   | b5   |
| 22 ♖xf7+ | ♗xf7 |
| 23 ♜b3   | c4   |
| 24 ♜d4   | ♜c5  |
| 25 ♜d5   | ♜h7  |

Attempting to win the d-pawn with the immediate 25...♜b7 would run into 26 ♜b6! ♜d8 27 d7 ♜f6 28 ♜d5 ♜f7 29 ♜b6 when Black would have to play 29...♜f6 and a draw is the most likely result.

- |         |      |
|---------|------|
| 26 ♜c2  | ♜d8  |
| 27 ♜e7  | f4   |
| 28 ♜dc6 | ♜d7  |
| 29 exf4 | ♜d3! |



Black has correctly assessed that White's position would rapidly collapse once the dangerous d-pawn has been rounded up.

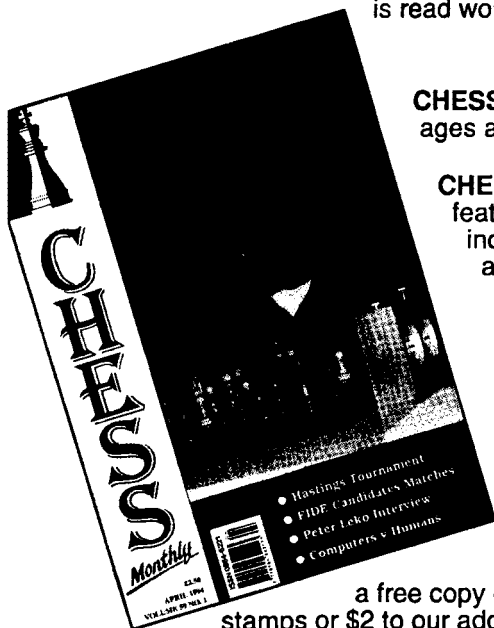
30 fxg5 hxg5 31 ♜c8 ♜f8 32 ♜6e7 ♗e5 33 g4 ♜e8 34 h4 ♗xd6 35 ♜xd6 ♜xe7 36 ♜f5 ♜e2+ 37 ♜b1 gxh4 38 ♜a1 b4 39 ♜h1 c3 40 ♜xh4+ ♜g6 41 bxc3 bxc3 42 ♜h6+ ♜g5 43 ♜c6 ♜xf2 44 ♜f1 c2 45 ♜d6 ♜d3 46 ♜f5+ ♜h4 White resigned

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